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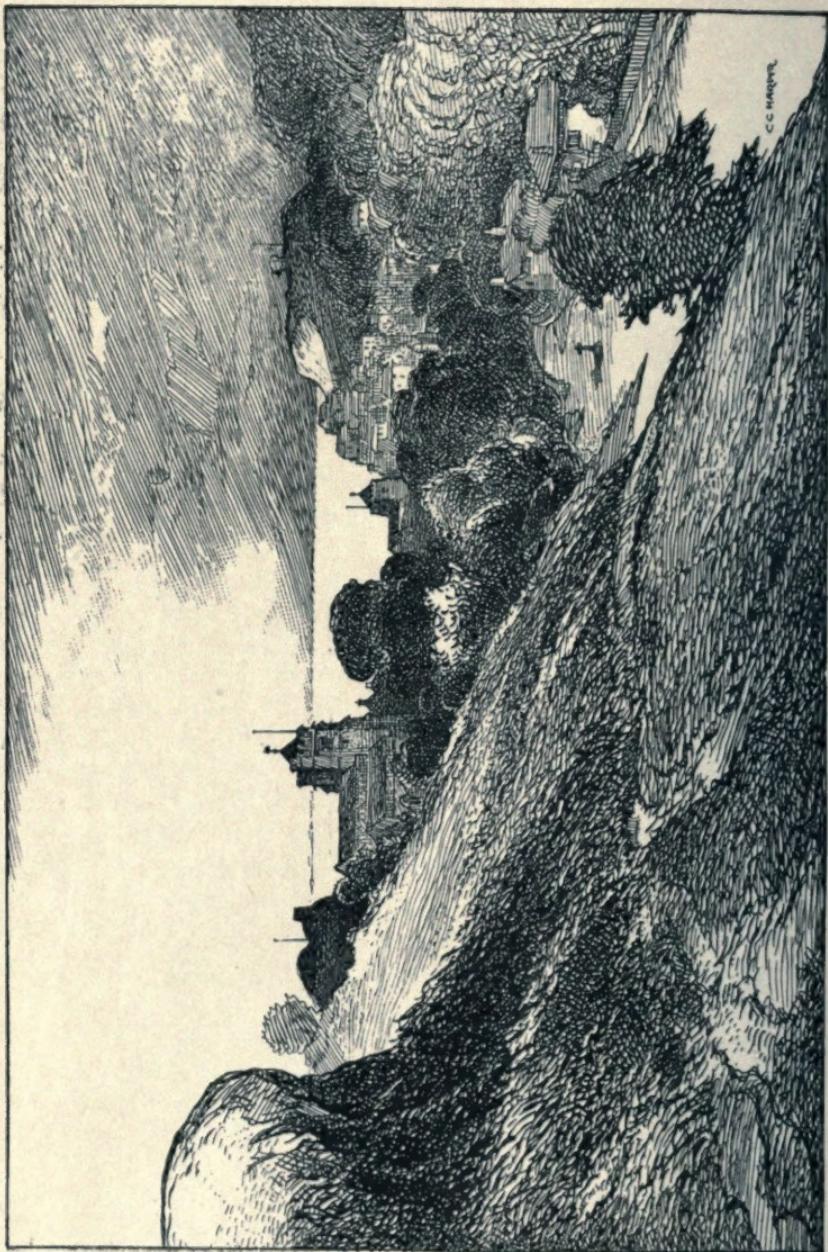
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THE HASTINGS ROAD

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[*In the Press.*]



C. C. MARSH.

ENTRANCE TO HASTINGS, BY MINNIS ROCK AND THE OLD LONDON ROAD.

THE
HASTINGS ROAD
AND
THE "HAPPY SPRINGS OF TUNBRIDGE"

By CHARLES G. HARPER

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHOR



LONDON
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1906

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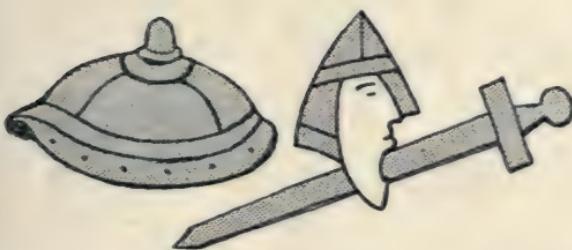
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PREFACE



THE Road to Hastings is hilly. Not, perhaps, altogether so hilly as the Dover Road, and certainly never so dusty, nor so Cockneyfied; but the cyclist who explores it finds, or thinks he finds, an amazing amount of rising gradient in proportion to downhill, no matter which way he goes.

Sevenoaks town, the matter of twenty miles down the road, is certainly preceded by the long, swooping down-grades of Polhill; but the lengthiest descent, by mere measurement in rods, poles, and perches, is only an incident in descending, while the inevitable corresponding rise is, in the climbing of it, a long-drawn experience. To the motorist, who changes from high-gear to lower, and then,

as the gradient stiffens, to lowest, and so with labouring engine crawls uphill, like a bluebottle up a window-pane, the revulsion from charging along the levels at an illegal pace, raising veritable siroccos of dust, is heart-breaking.

Sevenoaks town crests the rampartered downs, and the hilly road goes up to it in steep lengths, with other lengths as near as may be flat, leading you to believe you are there, when in sheer cold fact you are not there, and still have other incredible gradients to climb. And yet, returning, you shall find the descent by no means so precipitous. River Hill by that time will have taken pride of place.

For the other hills, let them be taken on trust; they are surely there, as also are those long rises, insensible to the sight of the toiling cyclist, but patent to his feeling as he wearily pushes round his unwilling pedals. For the motor-cyclist, with disabled engine, the Hastings Road is more tragical than anything Shakespeare ever staged.

The HASTINGS ROAD is, in short, the pedestrian's road. You would not say so much of the Bath Road or the Exeter Road between Hounslow

and Taplow, and Staines ; nor even of the great North Road where it runs flat through Bedfordshire and Hunts. There the way recedes ever into the infinite, and there, if anywhere, the hurtling motorist is to be excused of his illegality. Here, however, on the way to Hastings, you linger by hillside and valley, for the road goes through the most beautiful parts of Sussex and of Kent, and marches through much diverting social and national history, to the scene of the crowning tragedy of Battle. I am not of those who find the story of the Battle of Hastings sheer dry-as-dust. It is to me a living story, though over eight hundred years old, and it will live for you who explore that stricken field, if so be you explore it away from the perfunctory guides who parrot the half-holiday public through the grounds of Battle Abbey.

But they are not necessarily the larger happenings that interest me in these pages. I can find it easily possible—nay, effortless—to turn from catastrophic struggles, and take an absorbing interest in some one's back garden : that is the way to keep boredom at arm's length. The mediæval knight who swore by his “halidom,” and the

modern hop-picker who says “blimy!” (and stronger things than that) are both entertaining persons; would that Time were bridged, and they could be introduced to one another! What the knight and the “caitiff” would severally think of either would be well worth the hearing.

For mere topography: let us maintain an invincible curiosity as to whence this river comes or whither it goes; as to what lies on the other side of yonder hill, or at the end of some alluring byway. Let us find entertainment in the manner in which the city, town, or village next on the map is different from those we have already passed; and with interests so varied the way will be all too short.

CHARLES G. HARPER.

PETERSHAM,

SURREY.

April, 1906.

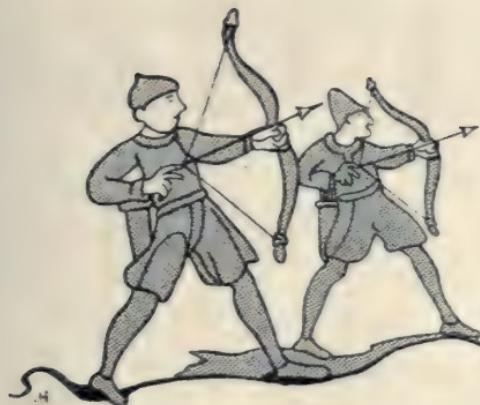
THE ROAD TO HASTINGS

	MILES
London Bridge—	
New Cross (New Cross Gate)	$3\frac{1}{4}$
Loampit Hill	$4\frac{1}{2}$
(Cross Ravensbourne)	
Lewisham (St. Mary's Church)	$5\frac{3}{4}$
Rushey Green	$6\frac{1}{2}$
South End	$7\frac{3}{4}$
(Cross Ravensbourne)	
Holloway	$8\frac{3}{4}$
Bromley	10
Mason's Hill	$10\frac{3}{4}$
Bromley Common	$12\frac{1}{2}$
Lock's Bottom	$13\frac{1}{4}$
Farnborough	14
Green Street Green	$15\frac{1}{4}$
Pratt's Bottom	$16\frac{3}{4}$
Halstead Station	$18\frac{1}{4}$
Polhill	$19\frac{1}{2}$
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Hildenborough	$27\frac{3}{4}$

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I

THE road to Hastings is measured from what, in these times, seems the unlikely starting-point of London Bridge, and is identical with the Dover Road as far as New Cross, where it turns to the right and goes through Lewisham, the Dover Road continuing by Deptford and Blackheath.

Few would now choose such a starting-point for a journey to Hastings, but there is reason in most things, and when this road was first travelled there was a very special reason for this choice. London Bridge was, until 1750, the only bridge that crossed the Thames between London and Putney, and the sole way to the southern counties therefore lay through Southwark.

But in those comparatively early times the historian finds no mention of the "Hastings" Road at all. Travellers very rarely wanted to journey from London to that fisher village; and

it is the road to Rye for which the inquirer after these things must look in the classic seventeenth-century pages of Ogilby's "Britannia." In that very elaborate and accurate work, published in 1675, the Hastings Road appears as the "road to Rye," and thus, after Flimwell, $44\frac{3}{4}$ miles down, where it makes as straight as may be for that once-busy port, the chance pilgrim for Hastings had to find his way across country as best he could by the directions of the country folk.

It is twenty miles from Flimwell to Hastings, and as I do not suppose the rustics were nearly so well informed then as now as to routes and distances, and as their knowledge on those matters is even now not profound, I think we shall do well to feel sorry for that wayfarer of long ago, thus left without a guide.

By the time the coaching age had arrived, and the road-books of Cary and Paterson and a host of others began to be published, the "Hastings" Road, rather than the road to Rye, had been invented, but still the way lay over London Bridge, and was measured from the south side of it, whence the distance is $63\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

The traveller of to-day would probably find Westminster Bridge Road, St. George's Road, and the New Kent Road the best way out of London, but it will be allowed that the best is bad.

As the imagination—whatever may be the facts—refuses to associate the Borough High Street and the Old Kent Road with the sylvan

beauties of the road to Hastings, I do not propose here to recount the description of those beginnings, given already in the pages of the DOVER ROAD; but will, as Astley of the Circus suggested to the mere dramatist, literally "cut the cackle and come to the 'osse," *i.e.*, a consideration of the coaching history of the road.

II

THE history of coaching on the Hastings Road will never be fully written. There are too few materials for it. None of the great critics of coaching—men of the eminence of "Nimrod" or "Viator Junior"—ever wrote about the Hastings Road, for it was a road of many pair-horse coaches, and "pair-horse concerns" were considered beneath the notice of those lofty writers. Even the Royal Mail was a "pair-horse concern," and was looked down upon accordingly.

It is as the road to Sevenoaks, to Tonbridge, and to the "Wells" that we first hear of this route in the coaching way; and, as ever, we hear first of the carriers and their waggons. Goods were conveyed on wheels long before travellers, and the heavy, cumbrous wains, drawn by eight or ten horses, and rarely going three miles an hour, carried heavy merchandise and the poorest kind of wayfarers quite a century before the horsemen, riding singly or with their ladies on a pillion behind them, took to what was at first considered the "effeminate" practice of riding in coaches.

Thus the early glimpses of the road reveal Nathaniel Field, carrier, plying in 1681 between Tonbridge and the "Queen's Head" Inn, Southwark, once a week, together with another carrier, unnamed, a competitor in the business. In the same year "Richard Cockett's Waggon" came twice weekly to the "Spur," Southwark, from "Sunnock, in Kent"; and from "Brumly in Kent" came thrice a week "Widow Ingerham's Waggon," to the "King's Arms in Barnaby Street, Southwark," together with "William and Daniel Woolf's Waggon," on the same days.

There is sufficient evidence in the diary of Samuel Jeake, junior, of Rye, that there was no coach further than Tonbridge, or Tunbridge Wells, in 1682; for he tells us that, journeying from Rye to London on May 22nd of that year, "I rode with my wife and mother-in-law for diversion, and came thither on the 23rd; had hot and dry weather." Returning on June 23rd, they went "from London in the stage-coach to Tonbridge; and on the 24th, Saturday, came to Rye at night."

On January 23rd, 1686, he went to London by himself. Starting from Rye at 8.30 a.m., he rode the twenty-three miles to Lamberhurst by 2 p.m. Refreshing there for an hour, he resumed his journey, in company with others, for the security afforded by numbers, and between Woodgate and Tonbridge, in the moonlight, the tracks being very bad and uneven, he and another became separated from the party, and immediately lost themselves. It was freezing hard. He alighted and led his

horse, until at last, coming to a pretty good track, he remounted, and by the grace of God and at a very late hour came into Tonbridge.

Whether this adventure was due partly to the good cheer of the “Chequers” at Lamberhurst, or wholly to the uncertainty of the track, it would be rash to say. But it is all very vivid to me : the brushwood alleys, the rimy branches of the shrouded woods, the clear, cold radiance of the frosty moon, the iron-hard ruts, and the breath arising like steam from Mr. Samuel Jeake and his horse ; but most real to me his joy when he saw at last, at the foot of Somerhill, the lights of Tonbridge town.

Next morning he left Tonbridge for London, and—being by himself—rode horseback all the way, performing the journey of thirty miles in ten hours.

The stage-coach of 1682, in which the worthy Samuel Jeake brought his wife and mother-in-law, went no further than Tunbridge Wells. It was probably, even at that date, no new thing, for the “happy springs of Tunbridge” had long been known, and had for some years been gaining popularity among real or fancied invalids. We may well suppose it to have been started somewhere about 1650.

III

WITH the dawn of the nineteenth century the service of coaches between London and Hastings begins to take some definite shape. In 1807

Robert Gray, of the "Bolt-in-Tun," Fleet Street, horsed the Hastings Mail, and continued for many years. In 1828 it was jointly run by Gray and by Benjamin Worthy Horne, of the "Golden Cross." Being only a "pair-horse" mail, it was, like its fellows in the same category, very slow. The Brighton, Portsmouth, and Hastings mails were, in fact, the three slowest in the kingdom, and of these the Brighton was the worst laggard. The mails, it should be explained, to correct the impression created by the eloquence of De Quincey and Hazlitt, were not *necessarily* faster than the stage-coaches. In some instances they were: in others they were not. Everything depended upon individual cases, and much upon distance. Where great distances had to be covered the speed would be very high, as in the Bristol, Devonport ("Quicksilver"), and Birmingham mails, of which the first averaged considerably over ten miles an hour; but in cases such as these of Hastings, Portsmouth, and Brighton, all the night lay before them, and the short distance could be taken very easily with pair-horse teams; while the four-horse teams running to the West and North were always upon their mettle, to keep their time-bills. The speed of the Hastings Mail in 1837, its best period, averaged eight miles an hour; and that in itself was a great advance from 1828, when the pace was under seven miles an hour.

Mail-coaches were, therefore, not always the most dashing public equipages of the King's Highway. From about 1825, when the "fast"

day-coaches and the post-coaches began to set the pace, the mail on the Hastings Road was for a time left hopelessly behind. In 1826 the "Royal William," starting from the "George and Blue Boar," Holborn, at 9 a.m., was at Hastings by 5 o'clock: speed rather more than eight miles an hour. Prodigious!

But that rate was very poor in comparison with the stage-coaches of almost every other road, and even in 1828, the Golden Age of coaching, proprietors, in announcing "Hastings to London in Eight Hours" appear to have considered themselves wonderful fellows. Indeed, on the old coaching bills of this period, discovered in 1893, during some alterations, on the walls of a building in Castle Street, Hastings, one coach-proprietor had the impudence (as we must think it) of setting forth "Hastings to London in 9 hours!" He did well to conclude with that exclamation-mark, although he placed it there in a different sense from that in which we read it.

There were then, among others, the Royal Mail, in $9\frac{3}{4}$ hours; the "Express" (a misnomer, indeed), in nine hours, from the "Golden Cross," by Tunbridge Wells; "Paragon," in eight hours, by Tunbridge Wells; and "Regulator," by Tonbridge. Hastings, therefore, was always badly served, and must have grumbled quite as much in the coaching era as it does under the dilatory service of the South Eastern Railway.

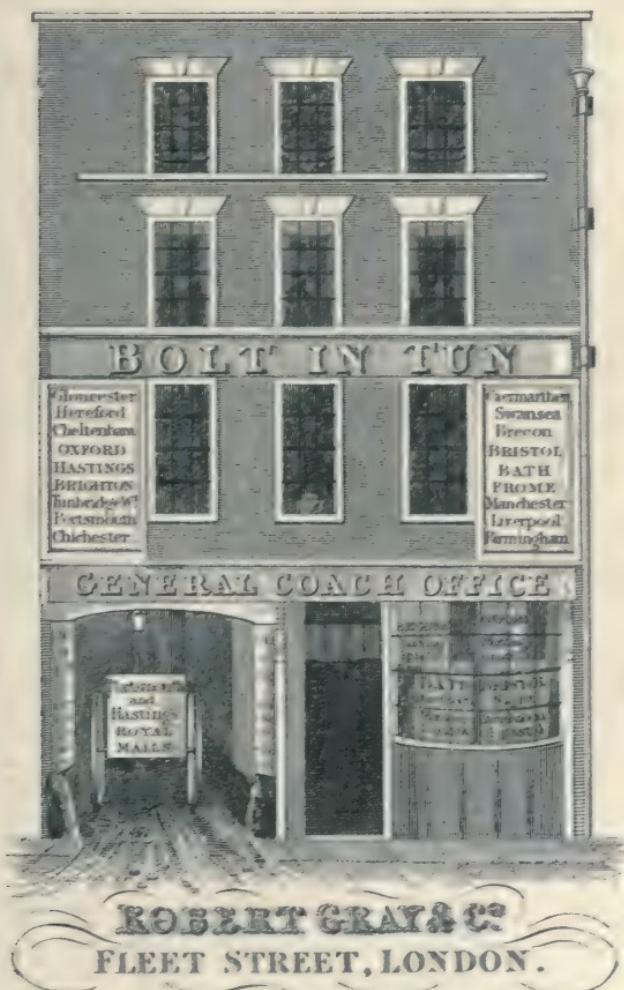
The last years of the Hastings Mail, or, as it was known in its two ultimate decades, the

"Hastings and St. Leonards," were signalised by a successful attempt on the part of Horne and Gray and their country partners to screw an extra mileage rate out of the tight-fisted Post Office for carrying the mails. It seems that the Mail had not been keeping time, and that the partners had received some remonstrances on the subject from St. Martin's-le-Grand. It was a fine opening for a revision, and accordingly, in December, 1841, they informed the Postmaster-General that they really could not keep strictly to the terms laid down by the contract they had signed in 1835, unless the mileage rate were raised from $1\frac{2}{3}d.$ a mile to $3\frac{2}{3}d.$ The extra allowance would permit of four horses being used instead of two: a thing not only desirable, they said, but really necessary on so hilly a road. In January, 1842, the Postmaster-General graciously acceded to this request, and for its expiring years the Mail rose to this unwonted dignity.

The "Bolt-in-Tun" coach-office in Fleet Street still stands at the corner of Bouverie Street, somewhat altered, and now the offices of *Black and White*. The walls are the same, and the archway depicted in the curious business-card, reproduced here, may yet be noticed.

Of the coachmen on the road to Tunbridge Wells and Hastings we know as little as—nay even less than—of the coaches, and almost the only touch of character is that drawn by a writer in the *Sporting Magazine* of 1830, in describing one Stockdale, who drove some coach unnamed.

He was, we are told, "a good whip." He was also, like poor old Cross, on the King's Lynn road, something of a literary character, and



BUSINESS-CARD OF THE "BOLT-IN-TUN" COACH OFFICE.

"beguiled the time on the road with Cockney slang and quotations from Pope! He drove to London and back six days a week—the Sunday,

he said, he spent at home studying the Greek Testament and translating *Oι οἱ τυφλοὶ ὁδη̄οι* into “Wo, wo, ye blind leaders !”

But coaches were by no means the only public conveyances along this road. There were, indeed, in 1838, many vans and waggons to Tunbridge Wells and to Hastings. Bennett’s vans and waggons plied to Tunbridge Wells four times a week ; those of Jarvis thrice, Diggen’s five times, Barnett’s four, Shepherd’s three, Young’s and Harris’s twice, and Wickin’s once : twenty-seven vans and waggons weekly to “the Wells.” To Hastings the waggons respectively of Moore & Co., Shepherd & Co., Stanbury & Co., and Richardson journeyed daily.

IV

THE electric tramcars that nowadays take you all the way to Lewisham from Westminster Bridge for threepence, and occupy incidentally forty minutes in performing the journey of six miles, travel on the average at the same speed as those old coaches ; but, of course, this not very brilliant rate of progression is determined by the crowded traffic of Walworth and Camberwell. When New Cross is reached, and the comparative solitudes of St. John’s, they bring you at a good twelve miles an hour along those switchback roads to the journey’s end. They are not looked upon with favour by that suburban neighbourhood, for, worse

than the burglars' "villainous centre-bits" in *Maud* they not only

Grind on the wakeful ear in the hush of the moonless night,
but noisily disturb every night.

It is a hilly district, revealed in these times by ascending and descending vistas of roads and roof-tops, instead of the grass and fields of yore; and Loampit Hill—the "Loam Pit Hole" of Rocque's map of 1745—is just a little interlude in the commonplace, where an old retaining-wall in the hill-top sliced through in a bygone era serves to keep the banks and the houses now built hazardously on them from settling in the roadway. A number of old hollies give the spot something of an old-world look.

Here, then, having come through all the hazards and chances of New Cross and the Lewisham High Road, we are arrived at the Ravensbourne and Lewisham. The Ravensbourne, although not a stream of great size, and with a course of but twelve miles, from its fountain-head on Keston Common to its mouth amid the mud of Deptford Creek, is yet a river of considerable historic, or legendary, importance, and—more important still—it is due to the Ravensbourne that the last surviving beauties of Lewisham are so beautiful. Legends tell how the river obtained its distinguished name, and in the telling take us back to those very distant days of Caesar's second invasion, B.C. 54. The story seems to support the theory of one school of anti-

quaries, that the lost Roman station of *Noviomagus* was at Keston ; for it declares that Cæsar's legions were encamped on what we now call Keston Common, and suffered greatly from lack of water until the constant visits of a raven to one particular spot attracted attention and aroused the hope that it was water which attracted him. The expectation proved correct, for there they discovered the spring forming the source of the stream. A well, called "Cæsar's," on that common still serves to keep the tradition alive.

We may, therefore, well look upon the Ravensbourne with interest, although it is true that a glance into it, over the bridge which here carries the busy London street across, sadly disappoints romantic anticipations. Deposits of mud, vestiges of pails past their prime, and outworn boots which the veriest tramp would scorn to own, line a discoloured stream, and grimy backyards abut upon it. To such a pass has civilisation brought the lower reaches of this once silvery watercourse, which is not so small but that it has tributaries of its own. Such an one is the river Quaggy, which embouches hereabouts into it. "Hereabouts," I say, because only the local sewer authority could readily point out the exact spot; the Quaggy being, in fact, at the actual confluence, embedded in an underground pipe. But if you may not see the actual meeting of the streams, you may at least see the Quaggy on the other side of the road, a little distance before it joins forces with the Ravensbourne. There you shall perceive

how only a little lesser indignity than a pipe has befallen it. Its little trickle still flows on in the eye of day, but it is made to flow in a formal concrete bed, here and there spanned by long stretches of pavement. A little higher up "Lee Bridge" crosses it, and there be those lesser Stanleys and Livingstones who have traced it to its source, even as those great explorers sought the beginnings of the Nile. A certain disappointment seems, however, to await those who seek the origin of the Quaggy, for those who have essayed, and accomplished, the feat describe how it rises on Shooter's Hill "at the back of the Police-station"! Shooter's Hill is well enough, but that last little piece of particularity destroys any lingering shred of romance.

I should not be greatly surprised to find the Quaggy the object of police suspicion, for that name is merely an alias, its real ancient title being the Ket Brook, whence the district of Kidbrook derives its name. The "Quaggy" is a later title, conferred descriptively by those who observed the quags, or marshy places, through which it descended from Shooter's Hill to these levels.

Here, as already remarked, we are come to Lewisham. Many thousands of people remember Lewisham as still something of a village; and yet so quick-presto are the suburban changes around London that they now behold it not merely a thronged town, but much less distinguished even than that—just a limb of great,

sprawling London, and thus stripped of most of its old-time individuality.

The place changes while you look. You turn your back awhile upon the few surviving fields, the hedgerows, the ditches, and when you glance upon the scene again they are gone, and carts are delivering loads of slack-baked place-bricks for the foundations of little £25 houses that will begin to settle down unsteadily and crack all down their fronts almost before the roofs are on. Change is rampant here, and Lewisham, that was once "Lewisham Village," is a village no longer. The proverbial saying, "Long, lazy, lousy Lewisham," that once attached to the place—a saying which, I doubt not, owed its existence more to easy alliteration than to actual fact—is, in one respect at any rate, out of date, for it is now become a very strenuous place indeed, where tradesfolk hustle for business and crowds throng the pavements. Modernity marches all over the place in its hobnailed fashion, and scarifies the soul out of existence. It cannot survive in a modern populous suburb of wage-earners who go forth at unconscionable hours of the morning to earn the means of existence and come home to their brick boxes, exhausted, merely to sleep; and so come to their prime, joylessly, and decline greyly to an obscure end. The spectacle frightens and saddens the observer who goes beneath the surface of things. He wonders what lies in the lap of futurity for the race thus dissociated from nature, nurtured on the pavements, and condemned

to lifelong comings and goings in the restricted outlook of streets ; and, looking upon old representations of what Lewisham was like in what he is apt to think the haleyon days of the “ 20’s ” of the nineteenth century, he grieves for the spacious rusticities of days gone by.

V

How many, or how few, of Lewisham’s myriads ever idly speculate whence came the name of the place ? According to authorities who are now, in these more scientific times, largely discredited, it comes from Anglo-Saxon words meaning “ the dwelling among the meadows,” or the leas—the “ leas home”—and was anciently spelled Levesham and Lewesham. Just a few vestiges of this ancient rurality remain, in the strips of meadows—now converted into what are shaping as beautiful parks—that fringe the course of the Ravensbourne on either bank, from Catford Bridge to Ladywell ; but we are now bidden disregard those meadows in any relationship with the name of Lewisham. The place is first mentioned in a charter of Ethelbert of Wessex, dated A.D. 862, in which it is called “ Liofshema ” ; and fifty-six years later, in a charter granted by Ethelswitha, daughter of Alfred the Great, it assumes the form of “ Lieuesham,” which gives us exactly the modern pronunciation. This, it has been remarked, has nothing to do with meadows, leas,

or pastures, but means literally “dear son’s home.” But, having reached that point, we come to a full stop, for no one can tell us who was that “dear son”; and the theory that the name of Leveson similarly derives from Liof- or Leof-suna, seems to have little bearing upon the history of the place.

Ladywell, just mentioned, is itself the name of a great crowded district, and it is thus curious to reflect that the name was utterly unknown until modern times. It arose from one of two closely neighbouring wells—one reputed to be medicinal—situated in what is now the road turning off the highway, past Lewisham old vicarage, to Ladywell railway-station and Brockley, which name itself—meaning, as it does, the “badger’s meadow”—enshrines the former rustic appearance of these parts. Ancient records and county histories may be searched in vain for mention of the “Lady Well,” which, oddly enough, seems to have acquired its name about the end of the eighteenth century. It was, about 1820, the subject of a published plate, showing it with a circular stone kerb, placed by the wayside of a pretty rustic road, embowered in trees. Thus it remained, amid ever deteriorating surroundings, until 1866, when it was destroyed in the course of sewer-making operations for the newly risen suburb that had grown around the South-Eastern railway-station of “Ladywell,” opened in January, 1857.

The well had long become a thing of the past, and its very site was merely a matter of vague tradition, when, in 1881, its stones were discovered

in the course of repairs to the bridge over the railway. A signalman rescued them from being again covered over, and removed them to a position beside his cabin, where they remained until 1896, when the following notice appeared in a local paper : " It has now been decided by the Lewisham Baths Commissioners to re-erect the stones by the side of the public baths, where they will be used to surround a public fountain to which the youths and maidens of to-day may once more resort, and there whisper their hearts' desire." Accordingly, they may be seen to this day in the Ladywell Road.

It seems likely, under the circumstances thus recounted, that the well was given its name about a century ago by some forgotten fanciful local antiquary who, bethinking himself that the parish church of St. Mary, Lewisham, was but a hundred yards or so distant, dignified the hitherto unnamed spring by the name of Our Lady.

That parish church is a singular, and in general an unbeautiful, structure, built in 1777 on the site of an older, and enlarged at the east end, in the same hybrid " classic " style, in 1881. It has a great south porch, unmistakably Corinthian, though it would puzzle an architect to put a name to the rest. But the tower has a character all its own. Equally nondescript, it yet owns an engaging quaintness which one would with sorrow see improved away for the sake of something more pure in style. The lower stages of this tower are obviously the remains of the old Gothic building, for the buttresses, some of the windows, and a good

deal of the old facing are left, while the upper part has either been rebuilt or re-cased in a style resembling the practice of the brothers Adam. Sculptured garlands in the famous manner of those architects give a daintily decorative effect, and, together with the four stone balls which occupy the places usually given to pinnacles, render Lewisham church-tower memorable and unmistakable among its fellows.

It is now, in short, with the neighbouring Colfe Almshouses, the most characteristic and distinctive thing left to Lewisham. The surrounding church-yard is very large, and the approach is made beautiful by a long arched yew walk, still charmingly rustic in appearance.

The almshouses, it seems, are doomed to destruction. They are reliques of the times when it could yet be said with truth of Lewisham that "its convenient distance from the metropolis and its beautiful situation have rendered it a favourite place of residence, and the neighbourhood is thickly studded with gentlemen's seats, many of which are splendid mansions, and with numerous handsome villas, the country residences of opulent merchants."

Abraham Colfe, who founded these quaint old almshouses, was vicar of Lewisham about the middle of the seventeenth century. He died in 1657, and left property in trust for the purpose to the Leathersellers' Company, who accordingly built them, as a tablet over the main entrance informs the passer-by, in 1664.

LAWNSIAM.

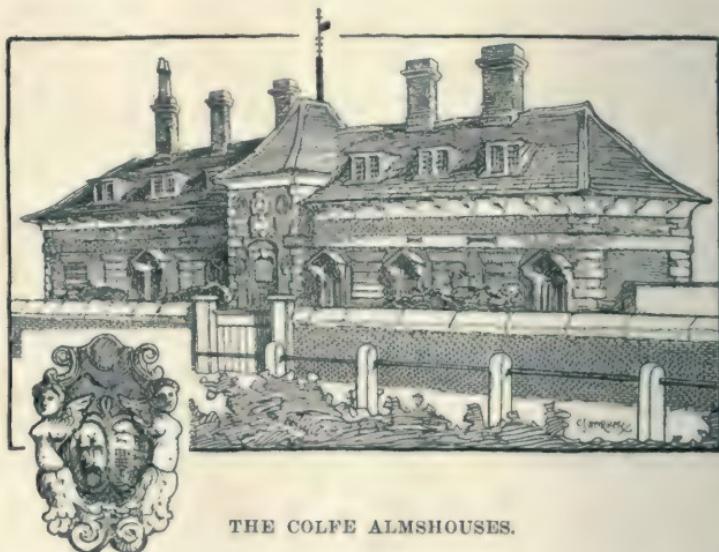


Another survival is the handsome old late seventeenth-century vicarage, already mentioned, standing a little out of its element, as it were, beside the high road. It was built in 1692-3 by Dr. Stanhope, the then vicar, and, as his surviving accounts tell us, it cost him £739 13s. to build. Dr. Stanhope, if we may accept the estimate of his character given by his monument in the church, was one of the best, for (*inter alia*) his "piety was real and rational, his charity great and universal. . . . His learning was elegant and comprehensive, his conversation polite and delicate, Grave without Preciseness, Facetious without Levity. The good Christian and solid Divine and the fine gentleman in him were happily united."

That, I think, is the *ne plus ultra*, the last word, in monumental eulogy. You cannot get better than the best, unless indeed you visit modern Lewisham and do your shopping at its popular "stores," where a searching glance may discover "best fresh eggs" at one shilling and sixpence a dozen, and "superior" at two shillings.

For the rest, a few strips of garden here and there border the high road through modern urban Lewisham, sometimes owning elms that in the old days were tall wayside trees. Here a giant workhouse, neighbouring the Colfe Almshouses, serves by its presence to underline and emphasise the social distance travelled—whether it be upwards or downwards let those decide who will—between the seventeenth century and the twentieth, and a few scattered weather-boarded

cottages are left, showing what manner of buildings were those that fringed the road in days for ever gone. Midway between the date of those humble old dwellings and the modern shops is one old-fashioned shop where they sell hay, corn, straw, beans, and sweet-smelling seeds of all kinds. The name over the fascia is "Shove," singularly



THE COLFE ALMSHOUSES.

inapplicable to this quiet, unassuming frontage.* To gaze upon its small-paned windows, to see and scent the hay and the fragrant contents of its bins of beans, peas, and varied seeds, must surely, with the coming of every spring, set the imprisoned wage-earners of Lewisham longing keenly for the banished country whose breath comes fragrant from within.

* Alas! since writing the above, the shop is closed, and the house to be demolished.

VI

THE streets of Lewisham the long end, in the present year of grace, a little beyond Rushey Green, where a side-road comes in from Forest Hill and Catford Bridge. Shall we pluck the rushes of Rushey Green, wander awhile in the groves of Forest Hill, or gather primroses by the river's brim at Catford Bridge? God bless you, ye innocent, there are no forests but forests of chimneys at Forest Hill, and the rushes of Rushey Green have long been replaced by macadam and York stone pavements; and although, I doubt not, you can find primroses in their season at Catford Bridge, they are only those that are sold by the flower-girls outside the railway-station, at what they style, in their Cockney twang, "one punny a morky barnch," a phrase which has been translated into English by the learned as meaning "one penny a market bunch."

Although the road onwards from Rushey Green becomes in a little distance rural, or at the worst dotted only here and there sporadically with new houses, there are marked signs that the fields and the remaining hedgerows are doomed. Among these unmistakable portents is the new railway-station of Bellingham, placed at the present time lonely, in the midst of fields, near the solitary Bellingham Farm. No railway company builds a large station for the express purpose of serving one farmhouse, and this is simply another instance

of that intelligent anticipation of events for which railway companies are now showing an unwonted aptitude. Time was when the companies would tardily provide station accommodation ten years or so after the appearance of a thronged suburb, and then only after being memorialised to do so; but a different policy now rules: it is the policy suggested by the depleted pocket.

If, however, the main road remains rural, things are far otherwise over to the eastward, between this and Burnt Ash, where the octopus arms of the Corbett Estate are spreading out and embracing the fields in a deadly grip. The long lines of streets and roofs, ascending the hillside, may be discerned from the highway, and it is abundantly evident that London is making a sly flank march that way, into Kent. The Corbett Estate is, it should be said, a building estate of cheap houses, chiefly for working men, and is administered on "temperance" lines, public-houses for the sale of drink being forbidden. Here, then, we see the working of one of those many fads for the making of a perfect community which distinguishes the present age. Here it is a Community of the Pump that is aimed at; there a Garden City, and elsewhere other nostrums are on trial, all directed towards the hastening of the millennium. But the wheels of progress towards perfection are not to be set rolling at anything above their normal speed by even the best intentioned, armed with the most exceptional opportunities, and this thirsty Sahara among

suburbs irrigates itself just the same, albeit with considerable trouble.

D—n his eyes, whoever tries
To rob a poor man of his beer,

in effect says the working man of the Cobbett Estate, and, to show his independence on those occasions when he journeys a weariful distance across the boundary of this drinkless district in order to get his supper beer, takes more than he ordinarily would, returning home a discredit to the good people who want to dragoon him into an avoidance of Bung and all his vats, in preparation for their new Heaven and new Earth.

The net result, and one wholly unlooked for, is that this prohibition policy has practically conferred an immense endowment upon the inns of Rushey Green, which, once modest enough, have blossomed forth as immense public-houses, doing a roaring trade with the unregenerate.

The road, coming to South End, comes really and truly to the end of London and its suburbs, and is at present prettily rural. Only those who know the district well are aware that, a short way off to the right hand, there is a little Erebus at Bell Green, where the gasworks are. If our old vituperative Cobbett were back again, taking his rural rides, I have no doubt he would call the place Hell Green, and he would not be altogether unjustified in doing so. But for my own part, I prefer to dwell rather upon South End, and feel inclined to curse the exploratory activity that led

me to discover that awful place at the back of the road ; so abject, so unutterably vile.

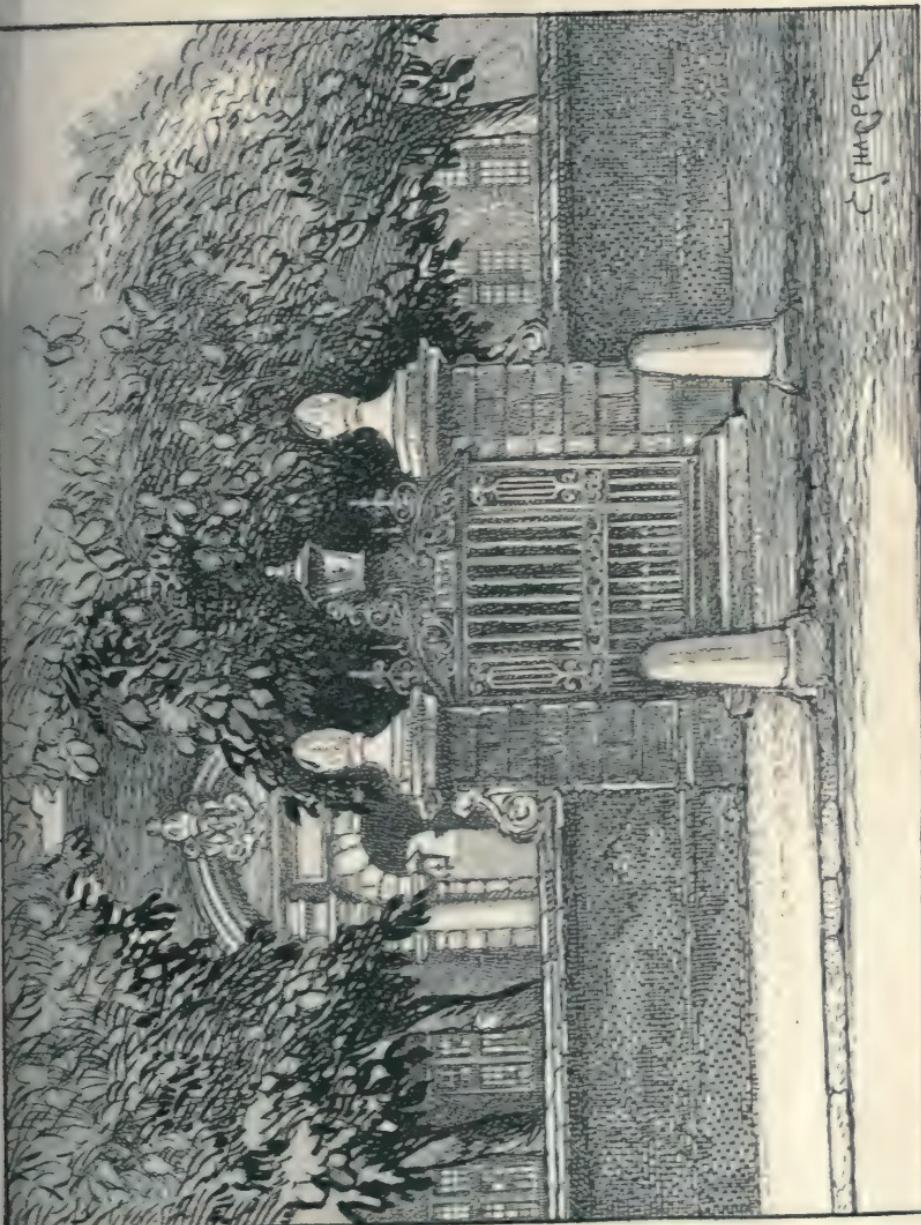
South End owes much—almost everything, in fact—to the beneficent Ravensbourne, which flows beside the road, and long ago was enlarged into a lake at this point. It is a pretty lake, the prettier because unexpected, and there are those who actually fish in it ; not for the lordly salmon, nor even for grayling or dace. No, it is rather the humble “tiddler” who makes sport for the small boy with a twig, a piece of cotton and a pickle-bottle ; and I declare that no fisherman in india-rubber waders, up to his thighs in the middle of a stream and at grips with a salmon, experiences a wilder ardour than that of these sportsmen of the neighbouring streets. I feel sorry, however, for the tiddlers, thus slain in their thousands. They do not long survive the water of the pickle-bottle, and presently, giving up the ghost, collapse and develop those extraordinary spikinesses which, I suppose, give them their proper name of “sticklebacks.”

VII

IT is a long, long rise from South End to Bromley, which stands among the breezy heights near Keston and Hayes. Half way up it there are still traces of the deep dingle that gave the spot the name “Holloway,” by which it was known to the road-books of the coaching age.

ENTRANCE TO THE WIDOWS' COLLEGE.

C H A P E R



It was an ominous place, suitable for the foot-pad's leap in the dark upon the traveller's back, and those wayfarers who were obliged to pad the hoof alone through Holloway when night was come wished they had eyes in the back of the head, in addition to the usual pair. Near by stood, and still stands, Bromley Hill House, once the seat of Charles Long, afterwards Lord Farnborough. In the dairy at that place one John Clarke, gardener, murdered Elizabeth Mann, a dairy-maid, and over against Holloway there was erected a gallows, and on it John Clarke, brought in a cart from Maidstone gaol, in due time swung.

At the threshold of Bromley stands the College, not an educational establishment, but a superior kind of almshouse, whose purpose is explained by the inscription set up over the doorway :

Deo et Ecclesiae
This College for Twenty poore
widowes (of orthodox and Loyall
Clergymen) & A Chaplin was
given by Iohn Warner late L^a.
Bishop of Rochester
1666

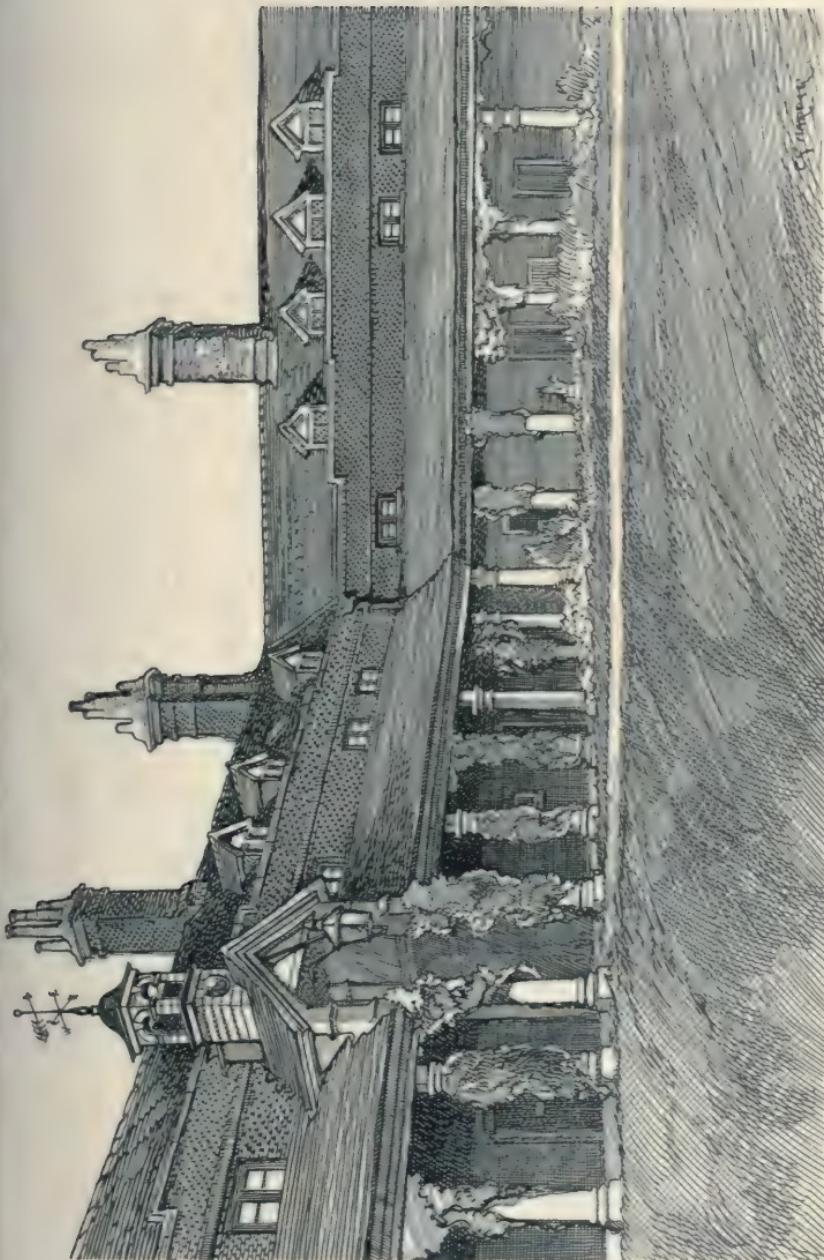
John Warner, Bishop of Rochester, was a staunch supporter of Church and King, in times when both the Establishment and the Monarchy were in a bad way. Charles the First was not wholly responsible for the troubles and tragedies of his reign. An acrid Puritanism was in the air, and had already manifested itself, very unpleasantly, in his father's time. It was the inevitable reaction

from the Renaissance gaieties under Elizabeth. The times were such that, even in the first year of Charles the First's rule, Warner found it necessary to deliver a bitter sermon directed against the politico-religious activities of the Puritans, based upon the text, Matt. xxi. 38 : "This is the heir ; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance." No one had in those early days of strife thought of beheading Charles, and we must therefore count Warner among the prophets.

The bishop came very near being impeached before Parliament for this exploit, and only escaped by the King stepping in and "pardoning" him in advance of Parliamentary action.

It is not surprising to find that, when the troubles culminated in war, the House was swift to sequester the bishop from his see, and even to seize his property. They proved the innuendo of his discourse at his own expense. He was forced to leave his palace at Bromley in disguise, fearing for his personal safety at the hands of the saints, and for years he wandered in poverty in the West Country. Like other survivors of the dispossessed clergy, high-placed and low, he came to his own again at the Restoration in 1661, but he was then an old man of eighty. Five years later he was dead.

A many-sided benefactor, he was not without his critics, who declared him mean. He seems to have somewhat keenly felt the charge, for he repelled it by remarking that he "did eat the



IN THE FIRST QUADRANGLE, WIDOWS' COLLEGE, BROMLEY.

scrapp ends of the neck of mutton, that he might leave the poor the shoulder." We do not learn whether those critics had the grace to be ashamed.

His College was a noble thought. He bequeathed £8,500 to establish it, and left a perpetual rent-charge of £450 per annum, secured upon his manor of Swayton, Lincolnshire, to provide pensions of £20 per annum for each of its twenty destined inmates, who were to be poor widows of clergymen, preferably, but not exclusively, of the see of Rochester. The odd £50 was for the chaplain's stipend.

The College stands within six acres of beautifully wooded grounds, with lovely lawns and gardens, and is very thoroughly fenced off from the clatter of the outside world by an ancient brick wall, tall and thick. Through the wrought-iron gateway, dated 1666, flanked by piers surmounted with sculptured mitres, glimpses of the front are caught behind the blossoming horse-chestnuts.

The little houses surround the quadrangle, which has its lawn, its covered walk, like an up-to-date and domesticated cloister, and its climbing-plants twisting round the pillars of the Jacobean colonnade. They are very desirable little houses, with basement kitchens, a quaint little hall, a fine sitting-room, and, on the first and attic floors, from two to four bedrooms. Those fortunate enough to secure such a haven for life are fortunate indeed, and in this sheltered backwater of existence often live to be centenarians.

But probably no one would resent being styled "poor" more than these collegians themselves. Poverty is a matter of comparison, and many would be content to "endure" it on terms of a dainty house, free of rent, repairs, and taxes, with from £38 to £44 a year thrown in—for many later bequests have rendered it possible to raise the pension to those sums. Moreover, to qualify for admission, a "poor" widow has now to be already rich enough to possess an income of at least £10, and probably most of them have much more.

Bromley College is therefore a kind of a minor Hampton Court, and great is the competition to win to it when a vacancy occurs. Well-dressed and well cared for in every way, the collegians are not to be pitied.

The occasional artist who comes to sketch the buildings finds the place delightful. There are pretty girls reading novels or presiding over dainty tea-tables: there are poverty-stricken widows in lace-caps, silk gowns, and gold chains—all well known stigmata of a plentiful lack of pence—and there is sometimes good music from soft-toned pianos.

The chapel provided for by the good bishop was rebuilt, at a cost of £6,000, in 1860, by the aid of subscriptions. The Jacobean building it replaces is said to have been extremely ugly, but that is easily said of anything already marked for destruction; and the '60's were scarce sufficiently well-disposed towards architecture of that period to be able to determine fairly what was ugly and

that which was merely not at that time fashionable in bricks and mortar.

There are now forty widows in the College, and a second quadrangle was added and endowed about 1790, from funds provided jointly by William Pearce, brother of Bishop Zachary Pearce, and Mrs. Bettinson.

There has been in the past a good deal of nepotism in the government of the College, and father has succeeded son in the chaplaincy, often held by greedy pluralists, and often thrown in as a kind of extra sop for the vicar of Bromley. Things like these must surely vex the spirit of that truly pious benefactor, who, when raised to be bishop, could not endure to hold his many preferments, and accordingly resigned them, much against the spirit of his age.

An even later addition to this institution was made in 1840, when the "Sheppard College" was built in the grounds. It consists of five houses, endowed with £44 each per annum, for the benefit of daughters who have lived with and attended upon their mothers in the original College.

VIII

BROMLEY, in the days when it was only a small thing, was in the diocese of Rochester. It has long since been transferred to Canterbury, and the manor that had belonged to the Bishops of Rochester ever since the eighth century, when

it was given to them by King Ethelbert, was sold with the palace into private hands in 1845. Those who will may see the exterior of it to this day, but it is not the palace that the Norman Gundulf built, nor even that whence Bishop Warner escaped, for it was several times rebuilt, lastly in 1775. The site of the once Holy Well of St. Blaise, the woolcombers' saint, formerly much resorted to for its chalybeate waters, is still to be seen in the grounds.

There are pitfalls for the stranger on every road in the way of pronouncing place-names. Bromley-by-Bow is (or was until recently, but there is a constant flux in these things) "Brumley," and accordingly this should have the like sound; but you will not hear this Kentish town so named. The natives will not change the "o" into "u."

But aborigines are somewhat difficult to find here, for the Bromley that was a little market town with two fairs a year and a weekly market granted by Henry the Sixth is a thing of the buried past. Bromley is now suburban. It has grown from the little place of 1801, with 2,700 inhabitants, to a populous town which in 1901 numbered 27,358.

Much of the old town has vanished, but it will never be like an ordinary suburb that grew potatoes last year, and has within six months grown streets of houses "fitted with electric light, hot and cold water-supply, and drained in accordance with the latest improvements," thus to quote advertisements. The town, in common with other places, has all those modern features, but it has also a surviving

proportion of ancient houses, and even when they are gone it will still have its history. By virtue of that past it keeps to-day a larger air and a greater dignity than it could command merely as the dormitory of City men who leave early in the morning and return at night, and pay rent, rates, and taxes, but can have little of the sense of belonging to the place.

Bromley, precisely like an assertive person who has "got on" in the world, signalised its recent expansion by acquiring a coat-of-arms; but not the most magnificent parvenu would dare sport a display so elaborate and comprehensive as that which alone would serve Bromley. In the recondite terminology affected by heralds it is "quarterly, gules and azure; on a fesse wavy argent three ravens volant proper between, in the first quarter, two branches slipped of the third: in the second a sun in splendour; in the third an escallop shell or; and in the fourth a horse forcené, also argent: and for the crest, on a wreath of the colours, upon two bars wavy azure and argent, an escallop shell, as in the arms, between two branches of broom proper."

It sounds like the description by a maniac of the contents of a shop-window, set up by a compositor who had misplaced the punctuation; but it is clear and pellucid reading to a herald. At any rate, there is no difficulty in discovering what it all means, for the device is proudly and abundantly displayed in Bromley itself.

These many charges are not without their

significance. The scallop shell is in allusion to the time when the palace of the Bishops of Rochester was situated here; the broom refers to the *planta genista*, the broom that gave, in the long ago, its name to Bromley, and still flourishes in the district; the sun in splendour indicates Sundridge, whose name itself by no means alludes to the sun; and the white horse is, of course, the familiar unconquered horse of Kent. The ravens recall the legendary history of the Ravensbourne. Beneath all this display is a Latin motto, to the effect that "While I grow I hope."

Gravely aloof from all these things, the old parish church of Bromley stands indeed in the centre of the town, but in a quiet lane leading to a pretty little public garden on the edge of a height overlooking all South London and its sea of roof-tops. It need scarcely be said that the long body and the apocalyptic towers of the Crystal Palace are prominent in the view. They brood like an obsession over all the southern suburbs.

The exterior of the church looks very venerable and rustic, and has even been improved by a tasteful new chancel built in recent times. In the church-yard, built into the south wall, is a small and modest tablet inscribed :

Here lyeth interred ye body of Martine French of this parish, with four of his wives and two daughters. He departed this life 12 January anno 1661, being aged 61, and his last wife died ye 13th of ye same month, leaving behind him one sonne Martine and two daughters, Sarah and Mary.

But Martin French is a very minor person
beside the neighbouring

ELIZABETH MONK

who departed this Life on the 27th Day of August 1753
Aged 101

She was the Widow of John Monk late of this Parish,
Blacksmith,

her second Husband,

To whom she had been a Wife near 50 Years:

By whom she had no Children:

And of the Issue of her first Marriage none lived to the second.

But VIRTUE

would not suffer her to be childless:

An infant to whom and to whose Father & Mother she had
been Nurse

(such is the uncertainty of temporal Prosperity)

became dependent upon Strangers for the Necessaries of Life.

To him she afforded the Protection of a Mother.

This parental Charity was returned with filial Affection:

And she was supported in the feebleness of Age

By him whom she had cherished in the Helplessness of Infancy.

Let it be Rememb'red

That there is no Station in which Industry will not obtain
Power to be Liberal:

Nor any Character on which Liberality will not
Confer Honour.

She had been long prepared by a simple and unaffected Piety
for that awful Moment, which however delayed
is universally sure.

How few are allowed an equal Time of Probation:

How many by their Lives appear to presume upon more:

To preserve the Memory of this Person,
but yet more to perpetuate the Lesson of her Life,
This Stone was erected by voluntary Contribution.

For lavish use of capital letters, adjectives, and
copybook sentiments this would be difficult to beat.

IX

THE interior of the church is injured by the galleries built round it, to accommodate a crowded congregation, and is otherwise of little interest ; the tombs of the Bishops of Rochester consisting merely of a mangled relic of that supposed to be for Richard de Wendover, who died in 1350, and the slab and the tablet, respectively, to John Yonge, 1605, and Zachary Pearce, 1774.

But in the pavement near the font, covered with a mat, is the ledger-stone marking the resting-place of Dr. Samuel Johnson's wife, who died in 1753. It bears, of course, a Latin epitaph, for that great literary giant of the eighteenth century was violently of opinion that the English language was no fitting medium for the conveyance of monumental honours. His arguments in support of that opinion are unfortunately not recorded. They would doubtless be amusing, but it would require a very robust argument to convince most people that an inscription in a foreign language, and that a dead one, not to be understood except by the comparatively few who are well versed in it, is the best vehicle for the purpose. There seems, however, to have been in Johnson's time, and before, and for some while after it, an odd feeling that the mother-tongue of the Englishman was, applied to monuments, vulgar. To be classic, even at the risk of not being understood, was the only resort of those who at all risks desired to dissociate themselves from

the vulgar herd. Johnson shared this feeling to the full, and thus the epitaph to his "Tetty" is couched in the language that Cæsar spoke. It extols the charms of her person and manners, and thus gives point to Macaulay's description of Johnson's singular infatuation for a woman twenty-one years older than himself. "Every eye makes its own beauty," truly says the old proverb, and here is an instance. It was in 1736, when he was twenty-seven years of age, that Johnson met the widowed Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, fell in love with her, and married her. She was then forty-eight, and had children as old as himself. Macaulay, in his broad, expressive, rather cruel way, says: "To ordinary spectators the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colours, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels." She was, continues Macaulay, "a silly, vain old woman. To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, and whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish cerise from natural bloom, his Tetty was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration of her was unfeigned cannot be doubted, for she was as poor as himself."

There are many tablets on the walls of this much-galleried building: one to a Mr. Thomas Chase, of the Rookery, who was nearly swallowed up by the great earthquake at Lisbon in 1755. He seems to have been born there in 1729, and

after his nerve-shaking experience to have removed to this country. He died in 1788, aged fifty-nine.

One harrowing inscription meets the eye on leaving the building. It tells how, on Saturday, September 10th, 1904, a peal of grandsire triples of 5,040 changes was rung upon the bells. They took 3 hours 6 minutes, and then quiet came to the suffering town. Bromley has my respectful sympathy.

X

THE way through Bromley is not straight and it is not broad. This is so much of a truism at Bromley that the statement is calculated to make its inhabitants smile indulgently, as do those good-natured people who are told what they already know. The early nineteenth-century roadmakers strove to remedy these defects, and did what they could to widen and straighten the way, and incidentally to abolish the picturesqueness of the place; but those "vested interests" that are a part of every civilisation forbade much alteration, and the road still trickles and meanders through the town and divides into two channels and unites again, like some sluggish, undecided river. It is an infirmity of purpose that can be carried back to a very remote origin: to the time, in fact, when Bromley was only beginning to be a settlement amid the then widespread wastes; when the prehistoric tribesmen drove their herds across the broomy heaths to water at the Ravensbourne, and

tracked deviously to avoid boulders, trees, or boggy places. These were the circumstances that fixed throughout the ages the windings of Bromley's streets. One somewhat important change was, however, made under the Improvement Act of 1830. A new road was cut to one side of the Market Place, starting just beyond the "Bell" and ending just short of the "White Hart."

The historian seeking something of the old coaching days at Bromley pities himself. He finds the "Swan" very gay and attractive in summer with displays of geraniums, calceolarias, and lobelia, but he does not find the old house, and when he has found the "Bell," in the centre of the town, he has come to a very beautiful building; but it is modern. The alleged fact that its doorway is on a level with the cross of St. Paul's Cathedral does not seem to have the significance it would possess were the old house standing.

The old inn is the subject of a slight reference in Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," where she makes Lady Catherine say: "Where shall you change horses? Oh, Bromley, of course. If you mention my name at the 'Bell' you will be attended to." The passage does not make my pulses leap.

Only the "White Hart" remains; appropriately enough white-faced, cool and clean-looking, with the white hart himself "couchant regardant, collared or," as a herald might say, over the portico. Unhappily, gigantic modern red-brick buildings encompass the inn, rising to four times

the height of it, and presently the old house itself will inevitably go.

Beyond this point is South Bromley, where the railway runs and modern expansion is most evident. You descend to it, and having descended immediately ascend again, up the not very Andean slope of Mason's Hill.

At the time these lines are being written Mason's Hill still remains old-fashioned. A few of its dignified Queen Anne mansions, standing with an old-world detachment behind their palisade of formal iron railings, are left; but they are to be sold for clearance and rebuilding, and so also are a group of ancient dormer-windowed sixteenth- and seventeenth-century houses of a humbler type. They have all the added importance that comes from being situated above a footpath which itself is in places raised more than head and shoulders above the road for wheeled traffic. Old wooden railings protect children, boozy wayfarers, and sheer wool-gathering, star-gazing folk from falling off the pavement into the hollow road.

Having wriggled its way through Bromley and climbed Mason's Hill, the Hastings Road sets out across Bromley Common, broad and straight and forceful, in a splendid forthright manner, about its ultimate business of getting to the coast. Most other roads show plentiful evidences of having, like Topsy, grown; but this, you can see at a glance, was obviously made. It occupies a ridge. Villas front upon it on leaving the town behind: villas of every type since such things



THE ROAD ACROSS BROMLEY COMMON.

began to be, and a leisurely walk past them is therefore something in the nature of a generous education in the varying ideals in domestic architecture since the days of the Regency.

But presently these are all left behind, and the fields on either side of this modern road with an ancient Roman inflexibility are broken only by the house and grounds of that most beautiful and noble early eighteenth-century mansion, the Rookery, built of the most exquisite red brick.

The Rookery belongs to a time before this fine road came into being: to that time when travellers came painfully up the hill to that open common much dwelt upon by old county historians. Opposite the mansion in those days stood the two polled elms known from time immemorial as Great and Little Beggars' Bush, and known most unfavourably, for in the shade cast by them at night not merely beggars, but those highwaymen of the meaner sort called footpads, lurked.

Time has a sardonic trick of turning the matter-of-fact descriptions of the old topographers into absurdly misleading statements. Thus, reading Lysons' description of Bromley, written in 1796, we smile at his remarks that "the Anglo-Saxon *Brom-leag* signifies a field, or heath, where broom grows," and that "the great quantity of that plant on all the waste places near the town fully justifies this etymology."

Bromley Common was in great part enclosed soon after the middle of the eighteenth century, and most of the remaining two hundred and fifty

acres were cut up and partitioned in 1822, amid much local satisfaction. With it went the broom near the town; although, to be sure, it is still plentifully to be found on the further commons towards Keston.

A piece of beautiful common-land through which the road runs at the extremity of the parish is still called "Bromley Common." Down below it, in a hollow, is Lock's Bottom, a hamlet whose pretty scenery is rather vainly endeavouring to bear up, under the infliction of some commonplace houses and a prominent police-station. There are picturesque alders in front of the "White Lion," but the blue lamp of the police-station spoils the sentiment of it all. Why, you ask yourself, *that* in a place by way of being so pretty and so rural? A few steps onward give the answer, in the great workhouse and the casual-ward, and the expectant tramps reclining, more pictorially than they know, by the pond under the tall fir-trees opposite.

XI

THE road in the neighbourhood of Lock's Bottom seems, in the old days, to have been particularly dangerous. It ran, in the middle of the seventeenth century and for long afterwards, through a wide district of unenclosed common-land, and was just one of those lonely highways where the foot-pads and highwaymen had matters very much their own way.

An unpleasant adventure of this sort happened just here, beside a vanished landmark once known to wayfarers as the "Procession Oak," to John Evelyn, the diarist, on May 23rd, 1652.

Leaving his wife to take the waters at Tunbridge Wells, he set out on horseback for London. In his "Diary" we learn what befell him on the way :

"The weather being hot, and having sent my man on before me, I rode negligently under favour of the shade till within three miles of Bromley. At a place call'd the Procession Oake, two cut-throates started out, and striking with long staves at the horse and taking hold of the reines, threw me downe, took my sword, and haled me into a deepe thickett some quarter of a mile from the highway, where they might securely rob me, as they soone did. What they got of money was not considerable, but they took two rings, the one an emerald with diamonds, the other an onyx, and a pair of bouckles set with rubies and diamonds, which were of value, and, after all, bound my hands behind me, and my feete, having before pull'd off my bootes ; they then set me up against an oake, with most bloudy threats to cutt my throat if I offer'd to crie out or make any noise, for they should be within hearing, I not being the person they looked for. I told them, if they had not basely surpriz'd me, they should not have had so easy a prize, and that it would teach me never to ride neere an hedge, since had I been in the mid-way they durst not have adventur'd on me ;

at which they cock'd their pistols, and told me they had long guns too, and were fourteen companions. I begg'd for my onyx, and told them it being engraven with my armes would betray them, but nothing prevail'd. My horse's bridle they slipt, and search'd the saddle, which they pull'd off, but let the horse graze, and then, turning againe, bridled him and tied him to a tree, yet so as he might graze, and thus left me bound. My horse was perhaps not taken because he was mark'd and cropt on both eares, and well known on that roade.

" Left in this manner, grievously was I tormented with flies, ants, and the sunn, nor was my anxiety little how I should get loose in that solitary place, where I could neither heare nor see any creature but my poore horse and a few sheepe stragling in the copse. After neere two houres attempting, I got my hands to turn palm to palm, having been tied back to back, and then it was long before I could slip the cord over my wrists to my thumb, which at last I did, and then soone unbound my feete, and saddling my horse and roaming awhile about, I at last perceiv'd dust to rise, and soone after heard the rattling of a cart, towards which I made, and by the help of two country men I got back into the high way.

" I rode to Coll. Blount's, a greate justiciarie of the times, who sent out hue and cry immediately. The next morning, sore as my wrists and armes were, I went to London and got 500 tickets printed and dispers'd by an officer of Goldsmiths Hall, and

within two daies had tidings of all I had lost, except my sword, which had a silver hilt, and some trifles. The rogues had pawn'd one of my rings for a trifle to a goldsmith's servant, before the tickets had come to the shop, by which meanes they scap'd; the other ring was bought by a victualler, who brought it to a goldsmith, but he, having seen the ticket, seiz'd the man. I afterwards discharg'd him, on his protestation of innocence. Thus," he concludes, "did God deliver me from these villains, and not onely so, but restor'd what they tooke, as twice before He had graciously don, both at sea and land . . . for which, and many, many signal preservations, I am extreamely oblig'd to give thanks to God my Saviour."

This incident of impudent highway robbery in midday sufficiently illustrates the general insecurity of the times and the risks that travellers ran.

But let it not be thought that all highwaymen were brutal and lacking in bowels of compassion. We know, from the stirring annals of Hounslow Heath, that a Duval could act a courtly part when a lady was in the case; and here records tell of a very perfect, gentle knight of the road, who could be polite and considerate even to one of his own sex. But hear what the London newspapers of 1773 said: "Last night Mr. Delves, whalebone merchant, being taken ill at Hayes in Kent, and coming to town in a postchaise, was stopped by a highwayman, who robbed him of his money; but

finding him greatly indisposed and not able to help himself, civilly wrapped him up warm, wished him better health and a good evening, gave the postboy a shilling, and ordered him to drive gently on." We do not find that he returned the money. He doubtless thought it enough to rob with civility and to wish the invalid well again.

XII

BEYOND this, one comes in a mile to the casual, disjointed, and scattered collection of houses called Farnborough, once a spruce and busy "thoroughfare" hamlet in the days of coaching : now a rather seedy place of resident market-gardeners and tramping hop-pickers. The old "George and Dragon" inn, that in the Queen Annean sort faces you on approach and, as it were, plants its considerable bulk half-way into the road, as though to dare your passing, has been furbished up in the public-house kind, and without difficulty stops the passage of most. It has a portico with pillars painted and grained to resemble real marble ; but the veins are too preposterous, and the much more real compo underneath peeps out, like the obvious advertisement in a badly written puff.

If I were an amateur of ugly houses—which the Lord forbid—I would turn to the right-hand here and make for Downe, which is two miles distant. For there, by the pond of that pretty village, stands the hideous mansion in which

Darwin lived, and where, in 1882, he died of a chill caught in prowling at night on the lawn with a dark lantern, studying earthworms. A carpenter near by preserves the coffin, with inscription all complete, in which the great naturalist was to have been laid (but for some reason was not), and strangely morbid people, with gruesome ideas of sight-seeing, go numerously to see it.

Keeping, however, to the main road and on to Green Street Green, we cannot altogether avoid the ugly, which appears, very large and brutal, in the Oak Brewery. I am told it is a famous brewing firm, but one willingly forgets their name, and only knows that their buildings are ugly and sooty, and look dry and make one feel thirsty. Perhaps there is more in that than meets the eye.

Green Street Green really *has* a green : a thing which in a world where New College, Oxford, and the numerous Newports throughout the country are among the oldest of institutions and places, and where villages with the prefix "Great" are almost inevitably among the smallest, was by no means to be counted upon as a certainty. And not only has Green Street Green a green, but it is rather a large and a not unbeautiful specimen. But perhaps its most striking feature is the extraordinary number of old City of London cast-iron posts, indicating the boundaries of the old Coal and Wine Dues area. It seems as though the City, having delimited those bounds in a fifteen-miles radius from London, and come at last, full

circle, to Green Street Green, found itself with a surplus stock of posts, and so set them up here, rather than be at the trouble of taking them home again.

It was somewhere near here that, about 1783, a malefactor who had robbed the mail was hanged in chains, upon the scene of his crime. A house was formerly pointed out, with a window bricked up at that time in order to shut out the view of the blackened body of the robber swinging and circling on his gibbet.

Pratt's Bottom, the next of the hamlets strung so numerously, like beads, upon this portion of the Hastings Road, is a mile and a half ahead.

It was here, on the night of August 27th, 1841, that the down Hastings Mail met with the first of the two misadventures that befell it on this occasion. The coach had passed through the toll-gate that then stood here, and was going at about eight miles an hour, when it ran over an old woman seated in the middle of the road, helplessly drunk. The apparent truth of the old saying that Providence especially looks after fools, drunkards, and children lost none of its point here, for the coach and horses, in some marvellous way, passed over her without doing her any injury except a slight bruise on the forehead, supposed to have been caused by the drag-chain. By some almost miraculous interposition, the horses seem to have dashed past on either side of her. The coach was stopped, and the passengers and guard, naturally thinking her days were ended by her being run over or kicked

to death, got nervously down to remove what they thought was at least a dying, if not an already dead, creature, when they were assailed by a vigorous torrent of abuse. Somewhat relieved by this evidence that she could not be very seriously hurt, they picked her up, and, as she was much too drunk to walk, placed her on the grass by the roadside, out of the way of the traffic. Then the coach started again; but they had not gone beyond two miles when, through the clear air of a very beautiful night, the coachman saw a number of waggons ahead, approaching. He called to the guard to blow his horn, which the guard accordingly did, when the waggons drew off to one side. Unfortunately they were drawn to their off-side, directly into the path of the on-coming mail, which dashed into Barnett's Tunbridge van, at the head of them. The van was hurled violently into the hedge, and the coach, going off at an angle from this terrific impact, then went full tilt into a hay-wain. The splinter-bar ran under the shafts of the wain and so, happily for the passengers, kept the coach from crashing over; but the shock of the encounter flung the coachman from his seat and the wheels went over his body. He rolled over and moaned piteously, but never spoke again. Carried into the "Polhill Arms," he shortly expired there.

Rough-and-ready roadside repairs were effected and the coach went on to Riverhead, but the passengers, thoroughly unnerved by the chances and disasters of this ominous night, preferred to

walk on to that village, three miles and a half away, where, at the "White Hart," they rested.

The surviving toll-house at Pratt's Bottom is neighboured by a signpost which directs to Knockholt, to Sevenoaks, to Chelsfield, and—to the Workhouse : *i.e.* the workhouse we have just



THE OLD TOLL-HOUSE, PRATT'S BOTTOM.

passed at Lock's Bottom. That way also leads to London, but that is merely an incidental matter.

The gently swelling hills at this point are composed of a stratum of pebbles, mixed with a proportion of flints: the product of vastly remote geological ages. These pebbles have given its Saxon name to the neighbouring village of Chelsfield, which is Cealch-field or Chesilfield = the field

of pebbles ; just as the not far distant Chelsham and Chiselhurst, with similar pebbles, are, in the same way, Pebble Home and Pebble Wood.

XIII

AT Pratt's Bottom there is an interesting parting of the ways. The straight road on to Sevenoaks, by way of Polhill, is modern, having been made in 1836. Before that time the route lay up along by the dangerously acute turning to the right, where the old toll-house stands, to the weary ascent of Rushmore, or Richmore Hill, and to Knockholt Pound. Ogilby, in his "Britannia" of 1675 shows a map of this road to "Nokeholt," as he calls it, with "Ye Porcupine inne" on the right-hand, near the summit ; and a "Porcupine" inn is there to this day.

At the foot of the rise stands the "Bull's Head" inn, itself of a considerable age, picturesquely faced by a row of old elms, and just beyond you may notice in the hollow on the right hand, where the modern schools stand, an unreformed piece of the original old road, going very steeply and stonily in a loop, and rejoining the present route a quarter of a mile onwards. A white house, now a farmhouse, just before reaching the "Porcupine," is still sometimes called by the older rustics "New Stables." It was a posting-house in the old days. At Knockholt, where, having reached the topmost eyrie of the downs, the road turns

left, the “Harrow” inn, that was once the house of call for the carriers and waggoners of the Sevenoaks road, still stands.

When the chronicler of these things has explored the old way to Sevenoaks and the new it remains more than ever a mystery why this circuitous way was ever followed, and why so many generations of travellers should have been content to continue along it when a considerable distance might have been saved, a less arduous climb encountered, and a much less dangerous descent made by following the line of country now covered by the modern road.

At Knockholt one has come to a very bleak and inhospitable place, as may be seen by that famous landmark, Knockholt Beeches, not far from the ancient route. The Beeches, it is well known, are situated on the loftiest view-point of the North Downs, and form as windy an outlook as it is possible to conceive; but in those days travellers did not travel for the sake of the views on the way.

It is *de rigueur* among the circles that frequent the site of the Beeches to call it “Knock’olt.” To pronounce the name in any other way would seem to them the sheerest affectation. The spot is, in fact, dedicated by common consent to the beanfeaster on week-days and to the sporting publican on Sundays, who drives his best barmaid out in a flashy trap, and has lunch at the neighbouring inn, known to the vulgar herd as the “Crahn.” Whether it be due to the strong liquors



KNOCKHOLT BEECHIES.

of the "Crown" or to the bracing quality of the breezes I do not know, but the sheer abandonment of the merry-making at the Beeches can excel even that of the 'Eath on a Bank Holiday. "The 'Eath?" you ask. Why, yes; there is only one possible 'Eath in this connection — that of 'Ampstead.

From Knockholt Beeches the eye ranges to the Crystal Palace, the enormity of it a little excused by distance; and the Tower Bridge and the dome of St. Paul's are easily to be identified. But those familiar objects soon pall, and the yearnful music of the concertina and the mazy dance commonly occupy the all-too-swiftly fading afternoon. 'Arry and 'Arriet exchange hats in the spirit of fellowship that has come down to them from the remote ages when semi-savage ancestors swapped head-gear at their feasts to typify equality one with the other; although I suspect that if you told 'Arry



A PHYLLIS OF KNOCKHOLT.

and his "donah" that they do what they do because their ancient ancestors were accustomed to do it, they would promptly tell you to "shut it, guv'nor." And they would properly be resentful, for every one prefers to think "I am I," self-actuated, automobilous, self-contained, and patterned on no model.

And at last, arms round waists, 'Arriet crowned with a bowler, and 'Arry's cheeks swept by the "ostridge" feathers of her hat, they go back in the solemn twilight to the waggonettes, singing the latest songs of the Halls.

But to resume the old road, interrupted too long by this interlude.

A stark, forbidding plateau of swede and mangold-wurtzel fields follows from the hamlet of Knockholt Pound, through which the road runs, unfenced, like a footpath. Then it plunges, with little warning, down the southern face of the hills and goes hazardously corkscrewing to the levels, far below. Down there, on the right hand, through the hedges, is Chevening, and you look down, like the rooks and crows, upon the roofs of church and mansion, situated, as Mr. Thomas Hardy would say, in his sesquipedalian fashion, "as in an isometric drawing."

This, indeed, is the well-known "Madamscourt" Hill, so styled from time immemorial, although the name derives from the estate of Morant's Court, at the foot. There is, at any rate, no lady in *this* case, and the direction, *cherchez la femme*, is entirely out of order.

The cyclist passes in a flash a large white house on the left hand, half-way down, and is too engrossed upon the problem of whether he will succeed in reaching the bottom safely to notice it. The house, now a villa, was in the old days of the road a very fine inn, called the "Star," and from it the hill is still known to many of the country-folk as "Star Hill." The exceeding steepness of the hill gave the "Star" the excellent custom it enjoyed until the way was diverted, and thus abolished the jolly days of the old road.

The coaches wagged so slowly to the summit that the passengers commonly walked quicker to the hill-top, and were already enjoying the very choice fare provided when the weary team pulled up at the door. The horses had, of course, to be rested, and as no one in those hospitable days could think of not offering coachman and guard some liquid token of their esteem, it was often a considerable time before the journey was resumed.

Just below the old inn the "Pilgrim's Way" from Winchester to Canterbury crossed the road, making for Otford, along the sunny southern slopes of the downs.

At last, gaining the level, the old coach-road joins the modern route at the "Rose and Crown," Dunton Green.

XIV

THE present road to Sevenoaks from Pratt's Bottom is closely neighboured by the South Eastern Railway, running in a deep chalk cutting and then disappearing in the grim mouth of Polhill Tunnel, one and-a-half mile long. The mephitic breath of the tunnel, bellying sulphureously out and flying in noisome wisps over the road, would be a good converting agent for those who, believing in eternal punishment and the Pit, have not yet ordered their lives accordingly ; and you who look down there think it rather surprising that railways with dreadful tunnels have not yet been pressed into missionary service by those who will not renounce the traditional Hell of sulphur and fire. Believers, convey your awful examples hither. Bring them to a belief in an Eternity of *that*, only hotter, and you shall have them instantaneously on their knees, earnestly making resolutions to turn from their wickedness, and live.

A station, now called "Knockholt," is planted here. It was formerly styled "Halstead," from the village of that name, half a mile away ; but, to avoid any possibility of confusion with another Halstead, in Essex, it was given this name, although Knockholt is nearly three miles distant.

The felled trees, wooden shanties, and sawmills here beside the road, at May's Farm, give the place rather the air of some scene of backwoods activity in America.

From here the road gradually rises to the crest

of Polhill, on the commanding range of the North Downs. The “Polhill Arms,” standing on the left hand, marks the beginning of the long descent into the Weald, very thoroughly masked and the magnificent view down to Sevenoaks hidden by a dense screen of beeches and firs. Something else is masked by those trees: a great modern fort, with emplacements for heavy guns, built up here for the defence of London, as part of a scheme comprising some sixteen forts forming an irregular circle around the metropolis at a radius of about twenty miles, and designed to check a sudden descent of any possible enemy upon the capital.

London has been held by military experts to be peculiarly open to such a danger; hence the forts of Polhill, Farningham, Dartford, Merstham, Box Hill, Pewley Hill, Esher, and others. But Englishmen, official or otherwise, are so used to considering the likelihood of invasion remote that, although many of the sites for forts have been purchased, it has been found impracticable to obtain sufficient money from Parliament to complete the ring and to thoroughly fortify these approaches. Parliament looks with suspicion upon Service proposals, and since the scandals of the great Boer War those suspicions have been very generally shared by the nation at large, which looks upon the methods of the War Office as those of a war office in comic opera.

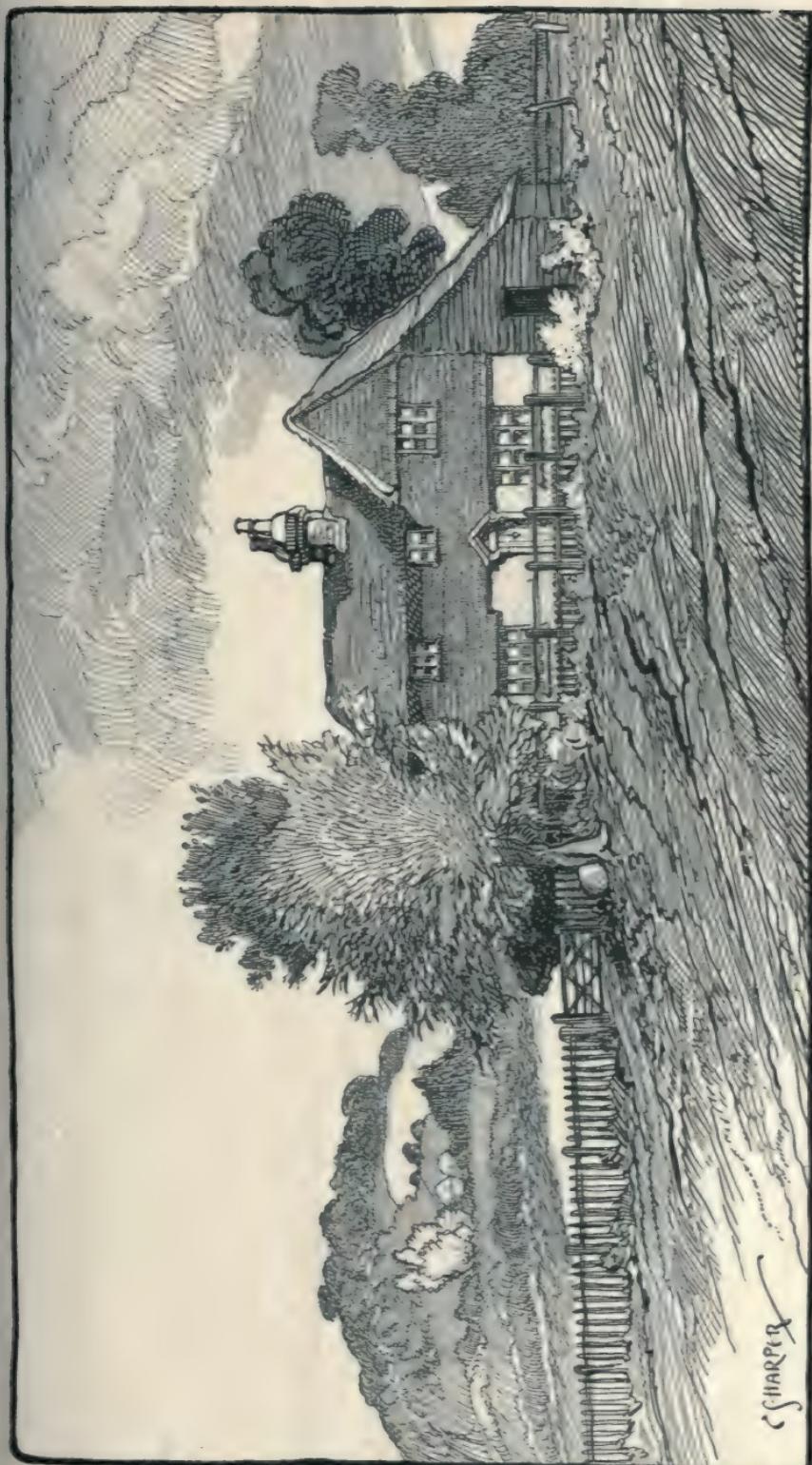
It is a tawny-coloured roadway that swoops down from the summit of Polhill, between the sandy banks of a wooded cutting, to Dunton

Green. Half-way down, the trees and the cutting give place to open country, and the hill itself goes by another name : that of Sepham Hill.

Down by Dunton Green, looking backwards, the hills, those noble North Downs, are seen to go terracing away beautifully east and west, their great, green, rounded shoulders dimpled with folds and gullies, shaggy here and there with belts of trees, or scarred outrageously with great gashes of chalk-pits, where the lime-burners every day demolish yet another fragment of picturesque scenery and roast it in limekilns, to the end that it may go towards the making of mortar and mean streets. There goes Old England, in mortar, to feed the spreading tentacles of the towns.

Just such a chalk-pit is that huge scar, beside the hill we have just descended, where who shall say how many tons are excavated weekly ? What would Ruskin have said of it ? Something superlative, without doubt. I think I hear him : "accursed," "damnable," he says, and Dr. Samuel Johnson, in the spirit-world, discussing the question with him, decides magisterially, after his wont : "The point is, sir, whether you are to use the materials Nature has given us for the improvement of man's condition in the world, or to neglect them in order to preserve the savage wastes of a desolate country-side, to gratify the diseased fancies of people who call themselves artists. Sir, let us take a walk down the Elysian equivalent of Fleet Street ! "

Dunton Green, formerly Donington, is a rather



AN OLD WAYSIDE COTTAGE, BELOW POLHILL.

C. HARPER

Cockneyfied hamlet that is at present halting between expansion and a few regretful reminiscences of a past rural state. It is very populous, and the children live and have their playground in the open road.

At Longford, to which we come after Dunton Green, the river Darenth is crossed, at an early



LONGFORD.

stage of its career, by a bridge that long ago superseded the ford. It is still a narrow bridge, with a roadway only twenty feet wide, but it has been already once widened and once renewed, as two tablets, built into the wall on either side, declare :

This Bridge was renewed by order of the Commissioners of Sevenoakes Turnpike. William Covell, Mason.

And

This Bridge was Widen'd in March A.D. 1813 by order of the Seven Oaks Turnpike Road. J. Smith, Archt.

The Darent rises at Westerham, only five miles away; but there is already a sufficient head of water in the infant stream to serve the purpose of a large flour-mill standing here.

Beyond it, a dusty stretch leads into Riverhead, past a strange little outlying group of houses lying back from the road and fronted with the rows of lime-trees that give it the name of Linden Square. Local gossip declares the place to have once been a coaching inn, but exact information is utterly unprocurable.

XV

THAT the village of Riverhead belongs very largely to Lord Amherst is obvious enough, in the highly ornate terra-cotta tablets on the houses, bearing a gigantic A crowned with an earl's coronet and ensigned with a shield charged with three spears. Also the "Amherst Arms," with its sign exhibiting two Red Indians and the motto, "Constantia et Virtute," proclaims the lordship.

Riverhead is a pretty little village, with a puzzling number of branching roads, situated at the foot of the long steep rises to Sevenoaks. Its name comes from the source of the Darent being near at hand. The church that looks so picturesque in the illustration is, in fact, a piece

of very bad early nineteenth-century Gothic, designed and built in 1831 by Decimus Burton, whose sympathies were entirely with the classic styles, as will be acknowledged when it is said that he it was who designed the Arch and screen at Hyde Park Corner and the lodges at the various gates of Hyde Park.

The corner of Riverhead selected for illustration here includes old and new. The gabled houses on the left are recent; the weathered wall on the right, with the curious little two-spouted fountain, is old; and very old and weather-worn is the almost entirely illegible notice-board declaring that something will be done to somebody doing something or other, followed by "£5." It is very vague and terrifying.

"Montreal," a beautiful park on the right hand of the ascent to Sevenoaks, is an historic place, the seat of Lord Amherst (Earl Amherst and Baron Holmesdale), descendant of that great soldier of the eighteenth century, Sir Jeffrey Amherst, Field-Marshal and Commander-in-Chief.

The estate of Montreal came to this family in the seventeenth century, when a Jeffrey Amherst of that period, a barrister, acquired it. The place, then called "Brooks," had been a seat of the ancient Colepepper family. The famous soldier was born here, and it is not a little curious to observe that his equally great contemporary, Wolfe, whose most renowned exploits were performed in the same series of campaigns in Canada, was born close at hand, at Westerham.

Amherst was born in 1717, and commenced his career as page to the first Duke of Dorset at Knole, afterwards learning the profession of arms in Germany, then, as now, the military school *par excellence*. How he fought in the victory of Dettingen or in the defeat of Fontenoy does not concern us here. His chance came when Pitt, alarmed at the policy of the French in Canada,



RIVERHEAD.

gave him high command in those territories ; and he justified the selection.

He was no kid-glove warrior. Sentiment was no portion of his equipment in the field, and if there were any in his composition he reserved it until his campaigns were fought to a finish.

To some of his doings or proposals the term “methods of barbarism,” shamefully applied by Little Englanders to the rosewater conduct of our

modern campaigns in South Africa, might well have been attached. In warfare with the Indians he was so enraged with the atrocities committed by them upon captured officers that he contemplated employing bloodhounds and spreading smallpox among the redskins. That last horror was, fortunately, sternly vetoed, not only for the sake of humanity, but from the very reasonable fear that the scourge, once let loose, might destroy not merely the "noble red man," but the white man as well.

Probably no one fully informed ever applied to Amherst the term of "dashing." His methods as a general were calculating and deliberate; he was, indeed, the very antithesis of the meteoric, impulsive Wolfe. Those qualities served his country quite as well, and himself better; for although he was not idolised as a hero, he succeeded, on his return home, in obtaining the post of Commander-in-Chief.

To be regarded as a hero, it is generally considered necessary to be killed in the performance of the heroic deed, which does not seem altogether satisfactory, and is indeed rather discouraging.

However that may be, a grateful country, in the person of George the Third, eventually offered Amherst an earldom. He refused it, and accepted a barony instead. He held the post of Commander-in-Chief for many years, and only resigned, under pressure, in 1795 in favour of the Duke of York, the king's son, whose military exploits are summed up in the once-popular lines :

The brave old Duke of York,
He had ten thousand men :
He marched them up to the top of a hill,
And marched them down again ;

a specimen of minstrelsy which concludes with the obvious statements that—

When they were up, they were up,
And when they were down, they were down,
And when they were half-way up
They were neither up nor down.

Amherst lived but two years after the close of his public career, dying in 1797, at the age of eighty-one.

He it was who, demolishing the old house at Riverhead, built the present exceedingly plain stone mansion, and re-named house and park “Montreal.” There was, in fact, something in the scenery around Sevenoaks that reminded him vividly of those great northern pine-clad territories of America, where he had warred with such distinction against the French and the redskins; and there is a spot on the road from Sevenoaks to Ightham, where the red-stemmed pines grow thick and a mysterious woodland hush enshrouds the place, so keenly reminiscent of the scene of his action at Crown Point in 1759, that he re-christened it by that name. The spot—in the woodlands of Seal Chart—may readily be found to-day, for it is marked by the Crown Point inn, whose sign, the “Sir Jeffrey Amherst,” exhibiting a picture of

the warrior himself brooding over the scene of his exploit, depends picturesquely from a tree-trunk.

A tall obelisk, built rather precariously of rubble, stands on a rabbit-infested mound in the park of "Montreal," in a vista opening from the house, and is itself surrounded by weird pine-trees. It bears long inscriptions reviewing those military operations. One side is dedicated to a "most able statesman" (by whom William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, is indicated), and another commemorates the meeting here of Amherst with his two younger brothers—John, Admiral of the Blue, and William, Lieutenant-General.

It was an era when England was fighting all the world, and had need of such commanders.

The long list of military successes is stupendous :

Dedicated
to that most able
Statesman
during whose Administration
Cape Breton and Canada were conquered,
and from whose Influence
the British Arms derived
a Degree of Lustre
unparallell'd in past Ages.

Fort Levi surrendered 25th August 1760
Isle au Noix abandoned 28th August 1760
Montreal surrendered
and with it all Canada and
Ten French Battalions lay'd
down their Arms 8th Sept. 1760
St. John's, Newfoundland
retaken 18th Sept. 1762.

Louisbourg surrendered
and Six French Battalions
Prisoners of War, 26th July 1758
Fort du Quesne taken possestion of 24th Nov. 1758
Niagara surrended 25th July 1759
Tonderoga * taken possestion of 26th July 1759
Crown Point taken possestion of 4th August 1759
Quebec capitulated 18th Sept. 1759.

To commemorate
the providential and happy meeting
of three Brothers
on this, their Paternal Ground
on the 25th January 1764
after a six Years glorious War
in which the three were successfully engaged
in various Climes, Seasons and Services.

XVI

THE long, long ascent to Sevenoaks, which crowns a ridge seven hundred feet above the sea-level, does not lack beauty, lined as it is for a considerable distance with hedgerow elms. But it puts on another kind of beauty at night, for as you come past the railway-station, and look down in the darkness upon the galaxy of red and green signal lights, it seems like a lavish Arabian Nights display of rubies and emeralds spread out there, in the black cutting.

The name of the railway-station, on the other hand, is vulgarity itself. It is known as "Tub's Hill," to distinguish it from the other Sevenoaks

* *I.e.* Ticonderoga.

station known (from the public-house outside) as "Bat and Ball."

Sevenoaks is greatly indebted to the South Eastern Railway for a matter quite outside railway accommodation. The town had long and vainly been seeking a good water-supply, and was still upon that quest when this branch of the South-Eastern was under construction in 1867. What the town wished to find, and could not, the contractors for the Riverhead Tunnel found, very much against their will. They struck a spring which for a time drowned them out and cost enormous sums to divert; but it gave to the town its present abundant supply.

There can be no place with more divergent roads than those at the entrance to Sevenoaks. They branch off singly, in pairs and triply, acutely and gradually, and all with a specious artfulness leading the unwary anywhere but into the town, and by choice into suburban roads that presently end in wastes of shingle, heaps of building materials, and uncompleted houses.

The old Sevenoaks of coaching days is mostly gone, or disguised out of recognition. There was then a "cage," or lock-up, in the town, with a pond in front of it and a ducking-stool for nagging wives or scolding neighbours. There was also a toll-gate and a weigh-bridge, where heavy waggons paid according to their showing in tare and tret. Sevenoaks was, in short, fully equipped with the engines of civilisation as understood at that period.

The "Chequers" inn, which still projects a somewhat old-fashioned front beyond the general building line, is a kind of "Jack o' Both Sides," for it has another, and quite different, frontage on to the parallel street. It was in those days the starting and arrival point of a coach to and

from London, supported by a select few who had business in the metropolis, and from that circumstance was called the "United Friends." Peacock, the coachman, was said to bear a striking resemblance to Tony Weller, which is not remarkable when we consider that Dickens constructed that plethoric, red-cheeked person from the typical stage-coachman of his age. There were then, in fact, "Tony Wellers," like "Samivel's" father, on every road. The coach was jointly owned by Benjamin Worthy Horne, John Stephens, and John Newman.



SIGN OF THE "BLACK-
BOY" INN.

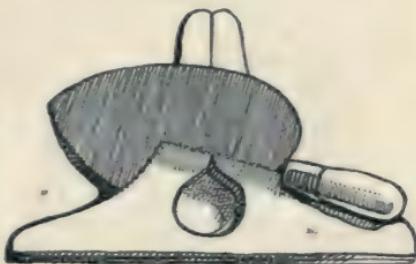
The "Wheatsheaf" has long since been transformed into offices, and the "Crown," that once owned a gallows-sign stretching across the road, has been given a modernised grey stucco front, and looks rather like a banking establishment. Among minor inns, the "Blackboy," displaying the effigy of a little nigger, is of considerable age, and takes

its name from the now extinct local Blackboy family who flourished greatly in Sevenoaks during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The more modern inns include the "Bricklayers' Arms," whose device—*not* granted by the College of Arms—is an ingenious arrangement of plumb-board and trowel.

But all Sevenoaks inns, past or present, yield in interest to the fine old mansion facing the high road near the church, and known as "The Old House." All details of its history have been lost, and it is only known that it was once the "Three Cats"—probably "The Cats"—inn, celebrated by that late seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century poet, Tom Durfey, who was kept by his patron, the sixth Earl of Dorset, at Knole as a mirth-maker and general bacchanalian laureate. You cannot imagine a poet with the Christian name of Tom being other than a bard of the barrel; and as for Tom Durfey, he was the most bacchic songster, and the dirtiest rhymester of all the dirty dogs of his age: which is why he is so reprobated by the good—and so read.

In his song in praise of the "Incomparable Strong Beer of Knoll," he says:

There's Adams, in hoping to pleasure his town,
Declares the best French wine is sold at the "Crown,"



SIGN OF THE "BRICKLAYERS' ARMS."

And well it may be, for he takes good rates,
And so does my jolly sleek friend at the "Cats."
But to strong beer my praises must come,
Leave them to isinglass, egg-whites, and stum.
Beer, fine as Burgundy, lifts high my soul
When Joudrain perks up for the honour of Knoll.

The "Cats" of course derived its sign from the arms of the lords of the manor, the Sackvilles of Knole, whose "supporters" are two leopards argent spotted sable, easily to be mistaken by the rustics of a land where leopards are not among the native fauna, for cats. It must have been an aristocrat among inns, for it remains still one of the noblest houses in Sevenoaks, with handsome red brick frontage of the time of William the Third or Queen Anne, with beautiful gardens in the rear, and others, equally beautiful, in front, on the opposite side of the road. It must have ceased to be an inn shortly after Tom Durfey wrote, for it has been in occupation as a private residence of the Austen family since about the middle of the eighteenth century.

Opposite is the very beautiful, characteristically "Queen Anne"-style house, "The Chantry," standing next the church and on the site of a demolished ecclesiastical building. It has lately been most exquisitely restored.

The church itself, a large building with a tall tower, is of a somewhat uninteresting Perpendicular design. The curious may notice in the churchyard a stone to "Milinda," wife of one Joseph Kennard.

A monument in the north aisle to William Lambarde, who wrote the "Perambulation of Kent," and died in 1601, was removed from Greenwich. Among the others, there are singularly modest tablets to the Amhersts. The most important is that to the charitable Lady Boswell, who died 1692, aged apparently thirty-seven, for the in-



OLD MANSION, FORMERLY THE "CATS" INN.

scription says: "During xxxvii years she conversed amōg us mortals." She left sums for "fifteen of the poorest Children to be instructed in y^e Catechism of ye Church of England," and for the much more practical purpose of teaching them to "write and cast accompts" and to apprentice them to "handycraft trades or employments." Her school is a prominent, and very grim, object on entering the town.

The most famous native of Sevenoaks is undoubtedly the mediæval Sir William Sevenoke, whose career was remarkably romantic. According to all received accounts, he was a foundling, discovered as a baby in the hollow of a tree in the immediate neighbourhood of the town by one Sir William Rumpstede, who named him "William" after himself, and "Sevenoke," or "Sevenoaks," after the town; brought him up, and apprenticed him to Hugh de Bois, citizen and ferrer (or ironmonger), of London.

Let us linger a moment to consider how popular in ancient times was this finding of neglected children in casual places by charitable knights. The frequency of it is a little suspicious. The most famous foundling incident (after that of Moses) is the finding, early in the fourteenth century, of one of the ancestors of the Stanleys. According to the legend, Sir Thomas de Latham was walking with his lady, who was childless, in his park, when they drew near to a wild and lonely spot where they found a baby boy, dressed in rich swaddling clothes, in an eagle's nest. The knight acted astonishment; the good unsuspecting lady looked upon the baby as a present from heaven. It was adopted and educated in the name of Latham, eventually succeeding to his father's and his adopted mother's property. In the course of years this foundling's daughter Isabel married Sir John Stanley, who adopted the Eagle and Child crest still borne by the Earls of Derby.

But to return to William Sevenoake. He became a grocer, and eventually, in 1418, Lord Mayor of London, became Member of Parliament, was knighted, and was granted for coat of arms seven acorns. To him Sevenoaks owes its endowed Grammar School and almshouses. Whether they were descendants of his whose name became corrupted into Sennocke is not quite clear, but it is quite certain that the unlovely name of Snooks derives from a further debasement of it.

The schools and almshouses were rebuilt in 1727, and are generally thought by passing strangers to be a workhouse or a penitentiary. It will thus be gathered that they are not beautiful. If strict discipline may be read into the ancient seal of the school, then it was in old times governed on the principle of Winchester, "learn or be whopped," for that device exhibits a gigantic, Jove-like master presiding over a number of scholars, evidently in fear of the immense birch he holds in his right hand. A resolute application of the weapon represented here would undoubtedly result in abolishing laziness in the scholar given a taste of it.



SEAL OF SEVENOAKS GRAMMAR SCHOOL.

XVII

WHEN you know Sevenoaks well, have learned its geographical situation, and have inquired into its surroundings, you will begin to perceive that it was once very humbly dependent upon the great historic residence of Knole, whose park it on one side fringes. Knole divides with the not far distant Penshurst the reputation of being the finest baronial pile in England. If their ancient lords could return to Penshurst and Knole they would still find there many of the buildings and appointments they knew ; and if the less ancient Elizabethans and Jacobeans were permitted to revisit their homes they would see them very much as they were, and so come back without any sense of strangeness.

Knole, of course, takes its name from its hilly situation. There are dim and fragmentary records of a former house, away back in the reign of King John. At that time it belonged to a great historical personage, William Mareschal, Earl of Pembroke, to whom it came as part of his wife's dowry. Eventually it fell to the family of de Say, who for more than a hundred years ruled the estate, when for an interval it passed into other hands, only to be repurchased by a Fiennes, who was on his mother's side a de Say. This unfortunate Fiennes had the ill luck to live in the troubled time of Henry the Sixth, and was further unfortunate in attracting the favour of that ill-starred King, who heaped many distinctions upon him, all to

his undoing. He was created Lord Saye and Sele, Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Constable of Dover Castle, member of the King's Council, Lord Chamberlain, and Lord Treasurer of England; and, in fact, closely resembled in real life Pooh Bah, the "Lord High Everything Else" of *The Mikado*.

The title of Lord Saye and Sele, which still exists as a barony, re-created in 1603, in the Fiennes family, has a fine sound of irrevocability about it—a kind of "do and dare," "what I have said I *have said*" connotation—to which it has really no sort of right. Saye, as we have seen, was a family name, and Sele has in this connection nothing to do with sealing, signing, and delivering as act and deed. It comes from the village of Seal, on the other side of Knole Park.

The amazing prosperity and court favour shown to Lord Saye and Sele raised up many enemies for him, and the King was obliged, first to sequester him from the office of Lord Treasurer, and then to commit him to the Tower of London, merely to secure him from the violence of the discontented people, then seething in the rebellion of Jack Cade, in 1450. That insurrection brought an exciting moment to Sevenoaks, for Cade and his army, pursued by some twenty thousand of the King's troops from their riotous place of assemblage on Blackheath, turned at bay upon them, and in the disastrous skirmish of Sole Fields, within sight of Knole, slew the King's commander, Sir Humphrey Stafford. Cade, assuming the armour

of the fallen knight, marched to London, where, according to Shakespeare, he struck the historic London Stone with his sword and proclaimed himself "lord of this city." He did more than that, for he brought the unhappy Lord Saye and Sele forth from his hiding-hole in the Tower, and hacked his head off at the Standard in Cornhill, afterwards offering revolting barbarities to his body.

It was the son of this victim of popular revolt who, six years later, reduced to extremities in the troubles of the time, sold Knole to Bourchier, Archbishop of Canterbury, for a sum representing £2,500 at the present day. The manor-house of that time was old and dilapidated, and Bourchier pulled it down and built the gatehouse and the principal front of the present group of buildings. Thirty years later he died and left Knole to the See ; and, with all other archbishops, was *ex officio*, so to speak, collated to the Realms of the Blest. He was succeeded by Archbishop Morton, who reigned fourteen years ; by Henry Dene (two years), by Warham for thirty years ; and then by Cranmer, who in 1537, from motives of policy, surrendered it to the Crown.

Politic indeed, for the Archbishops of Canterbury at that time owned no fewer than sixteen palaces, and men were beginning to inquire by what right lords spiritual were so gorged with things temporal ; just as in these times of ours the phenomenal wealth of great landowners is beginning to arouse an inconvenient criticism.

Knole came to the Sackvilles, whose collateral descendants still own it, from Queen Elizabeth, who in 1567 gave it to Thomas Sackville, a cousin on her mother's side. He already owned Buckhurst, and she created him therefore Baron Buckhurst; which is, as every one will acknowledge, a fruity-flavoured title. "Baron Buckhurst :" how finely it trips off the tongue ! The Queen gave as a reason for her gift the "keeping him near her court and councils, that he might repair thither on any emergency with more expedition than he could from his seat of Buckhurst in Sussex, the roads to which county were at times impassable."

Lord Buckhurst was, in fact, a *persona grata* at court: a man of wit, a poet, a dramatist. Also a man of tact and management, for in his old age, in 1603, he was created Earl of Dorset by Gloriana's successor, James the First.

And so the descent continued from first to seventh earl, who succeeded like chapters in a history, of which a new volume opened with the seventh earl being created a duke.

The fourth duke, George John Frederick Sackville, came to a tragic end in 1815, in his twenty-second year. He was an adventurous horseman, and on a visit to Lord Powerscourt, in Ireland, fell with his horse in the hunting-field at Killiney. The horse fell on him and crushed in his chest.

They brought his body home with every circumstance of mortuary pomp, as befitted a duke; he

lay in state at many inns on the several stages of the Holyhead Road, from Ireland to London, and finally was laid to rest with his fathers in the Sackville vault at Withyham, in Sussex.

With the widow of his cousin and successor in the title, the fifth and last duke, another volume ended, in 1825.

The ownership of Knole devolved upon Lady Elizabeth Sackville, sister of the unfortunate fourth duke. She married the fifth Earl De La Warr, and thus changed the name of the lords of Knole to that of Sackville-West. Her eldest son became in due course Lord De La Warr : to the younger sons she left Knole, and in their favour the barony of Sackville was created, in 1876.

XVIII

THE long street of Sevenoaks acts, as it were, the office of screen to the leafy glades, the hills and dells of Knole Park, to which you come along an alley between the houses. It is an extremely large park, and in many places peculiarly beautiful. To set down in this place its acreage and its circumference of six miles would convey a very dim impression of its proportions, but if we say it is two-thirds the size of Richmond Park its extent will be more generally understood. The house itself—if it be no derogation to style Knole merely a house—stands quite half a mile within the park, on a height, and looks, with its ranges of gables, towers, roofs, and chimney-pots, like some mediaeval

town. Great herds of red and fallow deer browse amid the bracken, or shelter under the great beeches, and regard the many visitors with an amiable and fearless expression, except in the "fence months," October and November, when they are quite ferocious, and bellow day and night like the bulls of Bashan.

Knole is a "show place." You may roam where you please in the park, and on most days,



KNOLE, FROM THE ROAD.

within easily ascertainable hours, you can be shown over the vast place on payment of two shillings. You would not be permitted so much in the millionaires' palaces of democratic America.

In this gigantic place Lord Sackville and his family occupy a small suite of rooms furnished in modern style, and, if you consider it closely, are practically the caretakers of a vast museum of antiquities maintained at their own expense. The

place is so extensive, and the maintenance and repairs so costly, that it would require the revenue of one of the great landlords of London to keep it up, and, in addition, to live in fitting state, and the Sackville-Wests have not those resources.

Some day a paternal Government will come to the rescue of owners of historic houses of public interest. There is a widely prevalent idea that all governments are paternal to one class, and act in a dominie and minatory manner to the others. Conservatives, in this belief, play the beneficent father to the aristocracy and their fringe, and waggle weapons of punishment at the lower classes; while the Liberals (in the accepted idea) pat the middle classes and the working men on the head and give them something to go away and play with; and then, turning up their sleeves and selecting a fine birch-rod, bid dukes and earls to come here this instant moment and take their trousers down. It is not really precisely like that, but Sir William Harcourt did something of the kind with his Death Duties. At any rate, those are the respective aspirations of free and enlightened voters on either side.

A fatherly Conservative Government may, therefore, some day be expected to come handsomely to the rescue of the owners of historic mansions: owners with acres of reception-rooms, picture-galleries, and baronial halls; owners with long pedigrees but slim purses, who can scarcely afford even to keep their many windows cleaned, let alone maintain floors and roofs and keep the

moth out of priceless ancient tapestries and silken hangings. Such a Government will allocate grants annually to those proprietors who habitually admit sightseers, and who make application for aid ; and surely the principle would be just, for it certainly is scarcely fair to the proprietors of such places as Knole, if witness to their good nature, that they should expend their substance chiefly for the delight of the tourist and sightseer.

The next step would be a competitive measure introduced by the inevitable Liberal Government ordained by the well-known fickleness of the electorate, by which all historic mansions would be scheduled and administered as to their "show" parts by a Department responsible for the safe and careful keeping of artistic and historic treasures, endangered by the carelessness, the poverty, or even the uninstructed enthusiasm of their owners. It will all some day come to pass.

It is obvious that a great range of buildings like Knole, covering nearly four acres, dating back, in part, four hundred years, and filled to overcrowding with things precious intrinsically and by association, must involve the existence of a large staff ; and it must be at least equally obvious that no lord of Knole could without great physical effort use even a respectable proportion of his three hundred and sixty-five rooms, traverse his fifty-two staircases, or look forth daily from more than ten per cent. of his five hundred and forty windows.

The house stands in what is probably the least

attractive portion of the park, where the grass is tough and wiry, and like that of some untended prairie. The long, dark-grey, stone front, pierced with mullioned windows, is like that of an ancient Oxford college. You are personally struck with the resemblance, and, reading the impressions of bygone visitors, you find they have all been im-



THE GATEWAY, KNOLE.

pressed in the same way. Every gable is surmounted by the leopard "*sejant affronté*" of the Sackville coat of arms, looking like so many tom-cats obeying the instruction of some unseen drill-master: "Eyes right."

The sternly walled-in character of Knole would discourage a burglar, just as it was intended to give pause to any hostile visitor; for the times when it was built were halting between the neces-

sity for fortresses and the liking for magnificence and display. Thus Knole partakes of the character of both castle and palace.

XIX

No armed guard meets you now: only a porter. There are many kinds of porters. There is the fish-porter of Billingsgate; there are also the railway-porter and the warehouse-porter, to name none others; but it is unthinkable to class the porter of Knole with these. Porters, I should suppose, by the etymology of their name, to be bearers of burdens, carriers, humpers of grievous loads; but this dignified person is rather of the bank-porter variety, own brother to those of the Bank of England, and carries nothing but a highly respectable suit of clothes and an aristocratic air. I am quite sure he is more dignified than even Lord Sackville himself, and his portly presence, his black swallow-tailed coat, his silk hat, and his red waistcoat give a more soothing effect of the permanence of things than even the grey walls of Knole can manage to impart.

The porter's lodge itself is a little museum of antiquities. There are the flint-lock muskets, the torch-holders, the brass-bound leather skull-caps, the cartridge-boxes, halberds, and other weapons of offence and defence belonging to the Earls and Dukes of Dorset from Jacobean to Mid-Georgian times: necessary equipments for the

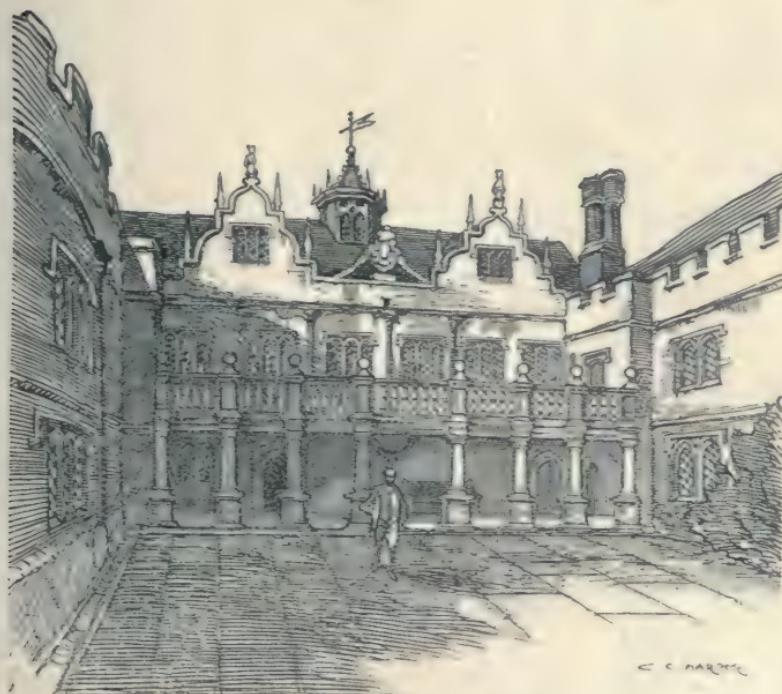
bodyguard of my lords and their visitors in those "good" old days. Here, too, you see the ancient horn-lanterns and the silver maces that were part of the display and the feeble illumination of those trains; and on the whole you are very glad that this is the twentieth century, and that these are outworn relics whose use has long since passed.

The gatehouse tower and porter's lodge lead into the first, or Green Court, one of the seven quadrangles included within the group of buildings, and so called from its lawns and to distinguish it from the next, flagged with pavement, and styled the Stone Court. The first is graced by two classic bronze statues: the "Venus Anadyomene" and the "Gladiator Repellens." The Stone Court leads by an insignificant loggia, supported on Jacobean pillars, to the Great Hall, built between the years 1603-8 by that magnificent person the first Earl of Dorset, who in all those years gave constant employment to two hundred men, in his alterations and repairs, and spent £20,000 on furnishing a bedroom for the expected visit of James the First to him.

The Great Hall was the banqueting-room. It has a boldly carved oak screen, in the characteristic Jacobean taste, but painted and grained, in some barbaric period, to *resemble* oak! Oak, you will observe, painted to resemble itself! To paint the lily and to gild refined gold were no greater works of supererogation. It is difficult to understand why it was done, here and elsewhere.

Ascending by the Painted Staircase, you come,

in succession, to the Ball-room, the Reynolds Room, the Cartoon Gallery, the King's Bedroom, the Chapel Room, Organ Room, Brown Gallery, Lady Betty Germaine's rooms, old Billiard-room, Spangled Bedroom, Crimson Drawing-room, and so forth; seventeen in all, filled with the most



THE STONE COURT, KNOLE.

wonderful old furniture, gigantic bedsteads, priceless china, paintings by the most revered masters, and portraits of a long dignified line of Sackvilles, Earls and Dukes of Dorset: great gentlemen and great patrons of the arts.

There they hang; rows of them. Grave-faced, dignified personages, whom not all the feminine

frippery that characterised masculine costume in Elizabethan, Carolean, and Jacobean times can make look foolish. They look responsible persons, weighted with the mellow gravity that could not well be absent in times when the headsman's axe was an institution. But they could not *all* be so wise as they look ; something—and that not in small or grudging measure—must be due to courtly palettes. The thought is treason towards the Muse of History, of course ; but surely *we* of this day, rich as we are in the little tin gods of politics, have not the monopoly of them, and may find an invertebrate Balfour or so amid these reverend seigneurs who look so inscrutably wise.

XX

THE Dukes of Dorset were not merely men with titles ; they were ducal Dukes, who lived up to their strawberry-leaves, and had a ducal way with them ; were dukes first and men a very long way after. There are none such now. The mould is broken, the recipe forgotten, the pattern mislaid. How sad ! That must be a degenerate age whose dukes are so uncharacteristic of their order ; whose aldermen, who macerate on charcoal biscuits, are lean dyspeptics, talk art criticism, and shudder at the idea of a banquet ; who are no longer those rotund, well-larded figures of convention that drank incredible quantities of fruity port and turtle-soup. That must be an effete

generation whose new-rich no longer strew their way with dropped aitches ; whose paupers, instead of skilly, dine royally off the best joints, and eat the finest bread, and when they ask for more—get it. In short, your typical pauper, millionaire, alderman, or duke no longer exists in real life. Even the novelists have learned their lesson and know better. Only on the stage shall you find those outmoded figures still strutting, and even *there* they are on their last legs. The stage is the last ditch of convention ; but the time is at hand when some dramatist will give us a stout and haughty workhouse inmate, a humble and cringing duke, and an alderman virtuoso ; and he will be quite as loudly hailed for an emancipator as ever was Robertson.

The Dukes of Dorset lived up to the fine alliteration of their title, and when that became impossible, they died out, like the oxyrhineus and the mastodon, who could not survive their environment. There is scarce a modern duke who, in the spectacular way, is worthy his title. Some are bored men and commonplace ; most of them “splendidly null,” as Tennyson might say. I know an undersized duke with a limp and a falsetto voice, who takes photographs with a hand-camera and an apologetic manner ; and another with the appearance and carriage of an unsuccessful commercial traveller. They would be ashamed to be ducal in their behaviour ; and it is quite certain that their forbears would be ashamed of them.

To view Knole intimately is not given to the

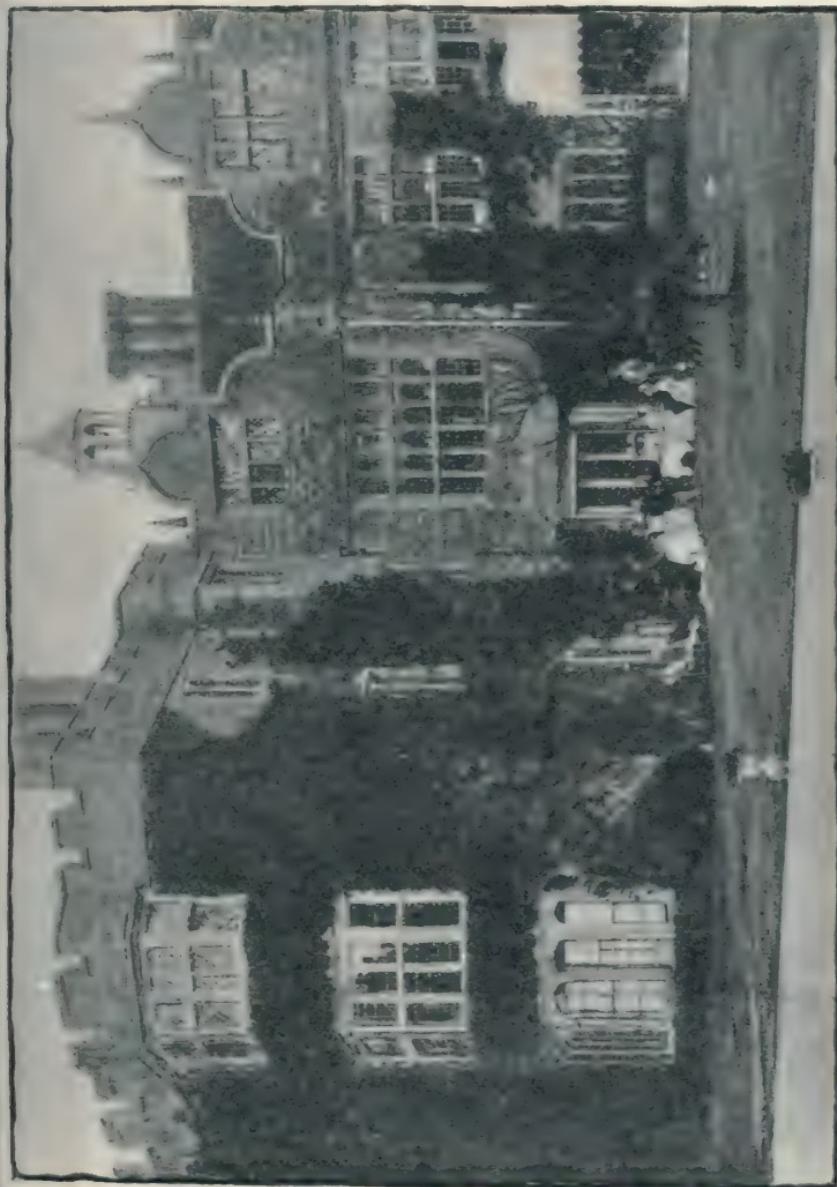
many. What are seventeen rooms out of three hundred and sixty-five, even though they be rooms of State ! In fact it is rather in the more ordinary rooms, if any of those at Knole can so be styled, that you read its everyday story of old. After all, the Lords of Knole were not always entertaining kings and great nobles. Sometimes they had a "day off," no less than the British workman of this era of ours, and then they were a thought more easy and less splendid, and occupied the second-best rooms, just as the ordinary Briton of to-day does, when he is not wanting to "show off."

I am afraid we all want to impress the visitor with a magnificence that is not kept up when he is gone. The lower-class parlour, the drawing-room of the upper strata, are the superstitions not only of to-day, or of one or two classes. They probably go back to the beginning of things, when even Prehistoric Man had his ordinary cave to live in and his extraordinary, in which his wife "received."

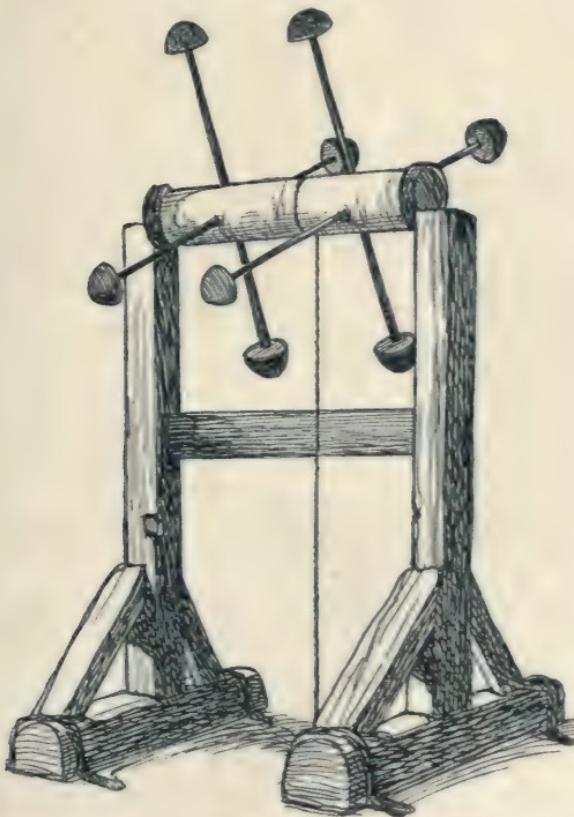
There are thus whole suites of ancient rooms at Knole, now silent and deserted ; and overhead, above the long galleries of stately magnificence, are interminable attics, called "wardrobes," not because of being storerooms of clothes, old or new ; but presumably the playrooms of the boys and lads of good family who, after the old English custom, were sent to Knole under wardship of the noble owners, to learn the usages of good society and the duties of chivalrous knights. In

Photo by C. Eason & Co.

THE SOUTH FRONT, KNOLE.



short, Knole, and every other castle or stately mansion, was, as it were, a training-college, a seminary of deportment and knightly devoirs; and in them one learned that good form whose



THE "DUMB BELL."

inculcation is supposed to be the only value of Oxford and Cambridge at this day.

An odd surviving relic of Knole as a College of Good Manners is the curious contrivance known as the "Dumb Bell," in that one of these wardrobes styled the "Dumb Bell Gallery." It very

closely resembles the windlass seen over old country wells, with a roller on which is wound a rope that descends through a hole cut in the floor, into the billiard-room. The arms projecting from the roller are iron, tipped with lead. This machine, which appears to date back to about the beginning of the seventeenth century, is thought to have been in the nature of a "home excraser," and to have been suggested by the bell-ropes and the exercise of bell-ringing in church towers. Here, however, the athlete could bring up his muscles without being a nuisance to every one within earshot. From this originated the name of those very different objects, used however for the same purpose of exercising—the modern "dumb-bells."

XXI

AND so, farewell Knole, mausoleum of a departed condition of things, treasure-house of art and tradition, puppet-show for the summer throng. One looks for it, topping the sky-line, expectantly, and leaves it with regret; unlike those two tramps seen and heard on this very road by the present writer. One of them listlessly noticed its towers and gables. "Wot's thet?" he asked his mate: not that he was interested, but for the sake of something to say. How can you be interested in anything when you are footsore but your feet?

"Corsel," replied the other, shortly; "*carm*

on." But he need not have bidden his fellow "come on," for he had not given the "castle" another glance, and had never halted a moment.

The road descending steeply from Sevenoaks and having Knole Park on its left is the coaching highway, improved upon the ancient road. It is



THE SEVEN OAKS.

steep now, but how much steeper, how rugged and how narrow may be seen towards the bottom of the dip, where a little gate admits through the oaken palings of the park, and leads down a hollow lane whose banks are thickly set with ancient thorns and other trees. It is, or was before the embanked road was made, known locally

by the names of "Shangden," "Shand End," or "Chene Dene," in delightful incertitude.

This is the original road, preserved for the last seventy years or so in the bottom, where the modern highway was slightly deviated and constructed at a higher level. It is a surviving portion of that road Archbishop Islip, travelling horseback to Tonbridge in 1362, found so extremely bad. He struggled persistently, but at last fell from his horse and became "wet through all over." In that pitiable condition he mounted again and rode on, without any change of clothes, and so was seized with paralysis.

An archway under the modern road, seen even more distinctly from a bye-road branching off to the right, was made for the especial purpose of maintaining unbroken the old line of an even more ancient cross-road—a pack-horse way—which crossed the old road from Sevenoaks to Tonbridge in the hollow, at right angles. The arch, however, has long been blocked up with timbering, and the pack-horse route is scarcely discernible in the park and the meadows.

Coming to the next rise, crowned by the "White Hart" inn, a line of seven trees is seen in the hedgerow on the right hand. These are the comparatively modern seven oaks planted at some uncertain time to commemorate those that are supposed to have originated the name of the neighbouring town. There is considerable difference in the size of the trees, and it is thus to be presumed that some of the seven were, from some

cause or other, destroyed, and replaced later. The oldest may date back two centuries, the others sixty years or so later. No information exists as to who planted them, or when ; even the site of the old original seven oaks that gave the town



THE "WHITE HART" INN.

of Sevenoaks its name, away back in the dark ages, is unknown.

This is the summit of River Hill : a place which figures in an early sixteenth-century trust-fund that offers some entertaining history.

XXII

THE road to Hastings, or to Rye, was the beneficiary of a bequest left in 1526 by James Wilford, a successor of those “pious benefactors” who from the earliest times, for the good of their souls less than for love of their kind, had been wont to repair highways, build bridges and causeways, and perform the like services, either by direct gifts or through the intermediary of the Church.

Of the practical piety of James Wilford I think there can be little doubt. In the times when he lived, Reformation was in the air. The religious houses were moribund, and had Henry the Eighth not disestablished and suppressed them, another would have done so. People rather scoffed at the idea of purchasing salvation by bequests, just as you in modern times insure against fire. Wilford, therefore, in that he does not appear to have left his money with any ulterior object of saving his soul, was really more pious than he knew, and perhaps saved it the more certainly. Let us trust he is enjoying the full credit of his good deed.

This public benefactor, a “rippier” of Rye, and said to have been an alderman of London, in his will of 1526 stated that he had actually *made* the road from River Hill to Northiam church, a length of some twenty-six miles; and for the perpetual repair of the ruinous parts he left an annuity of £7, charged upon the “Saracen’s

Head," Friday Street, Cheapside, belonging to the Merchant Taylors' Company.

There had been sufficient reasons in his lifetime for him to make or amend this road ; for by the term "rippier" a fish-carrier was meant, and James Wilford would appear to constantly have travelled it in his business of supplying London with fish, carried on horseback in panniers. That it should have been possible to convey fish this distance in the early part of the sixteenth century so expeditiously that it arrived in good condition is a somewhat striking testimony to the enterprise of an age commonly thought to have been ignorant of speedy communications.

The Merchant Taylors were by the terms of this will to pay the £7 annually to the executors and relatives bearing the name of Wilford, and after their death were to make payment to the vicar and churchwardens of Rye. In the event of those authorities neglecting their duty of applying the money for the benefit of the road, the annuity was to be paid to the vicar and churchwardens of Northiam ; and, should they default, was then to devolve upon Newenden.

These cautious provisions seem to have been prophetic, for Rye *did* actually at some uncertain time lose the money, which was then received by Northiam until Midsummer, 1799, when, from some dereliction of duty, it passed, as directed, to Newenden. Disputes then appear to have arisen, for in 1804 the Merchant Taylors, not quite sure of their position, refused any longer to pay the

amount until a legal decision was arrived at. The whole matter then remained in abeyance, as probably being too small a sum to worry about, until 1819. By that time the twenty years' accumulation was worth having, and the inhabitants of Rye, Northiam, and Newenden accordingly joined forces and petitioned the Merchant Taylors, praying them to disburse the money to Rye, which was done, the vicar and churchwardens of that town in turn handing it over to the commissioners of the turnpike road from Flimwell to Rye. The sum of £140 was then paid over, from which the Land Tax authorities sweated £28, twenty years' land-tax, at 28s. a year.

Flimwell is the point where the road to Rye branches from the Hastings Road. Nineteen and a half miles of road, therefore, appear by this decision to have been cut off from these small mercies.

The trifling sum now trickles into the revenue of the Kent County Council.

River Hill was once—in the days of inefficient brake-power—a terror to cyclists. A terror with reason, for it is three-quarters of a mile long, and not straight; and it has notoriously been the scene of many accidents at the two sharp turns in its course—one left and one right. A joint C.T.C. and N.C.U. danger-board at the beginning is supplemented by the notice that it is unrideable without a brake; but that is as may be. When the first chapter of cycling was being enacted, an early wheelman rode it, quite inadver-

tently, and lived to tell the tale, in picturesque fashion.

In the ancient days of cycling, when it had not long ceased to be "velocipeding" and was still in the intermediate stage of "bicycling," this greatly daring person decided to ride from Greenwich to Burwash—some fifty miles—on what was then, with the most exquisite appropriateness, called a "bone-shaker." It was so unusual and adventurous a thing to do that he wrote an account of it, and it duly appears in the records of that time. He thought how splendid a thing it would be to run hundreds of miles about the country at "a speed of from ten to fourteen miles an hour," as in the advertisements, and so purchased what he thought to be a very camelopard of a machine, with 45-in. wheels.

In two days he had so mastered this fearsome contrivance that he decided to start, and did so, in the evening. He had not gone more than a mile or two when he met a butcher standing in the middle of the road, who continued to stand there until he was run into, when both were upset. The bicyclist was pitched over the handles and cut his knee, and the butcher abused him until the cyclist—I mean the bicyclist—showed fight, when he made off.

By the time this early wheelman had reached Bromley he was almost exhausted, and realised that he, at any rate, was not a fourteen-mile-an-hour rider. There was also, he discovered, an undue proportion of hills to be climbed—a dis-

covery still being re-discovered daily by thousands of his descendants in straddling two wheels.

At Bromley he rested and refreshed; and again, at 9 p.m. at Sevenoaks, where his exertions had given him such an appetite that, when he had finished discussing the cold beef, he dared not look at the waiter. At River Hill—even in these days



RIVER HILL AND THE KENTISH WEALD

to be descended with extra caution—the rough road broke his primitive brake, and then at last—oh, happiness!—he found himself going fourteen miles an hour—and a bit over. There was no stopping, and the only thing to be done was to keep in the middle of the road, continually shouting, and in the hope nothing was in the way.

Not even nowadays would a cyclist care to descend River Hill in this manner, in the dark, brakeless ; but this adventurous one found the level, and, passing through Tunbridge Wells, at last reached his destination with only an incidental attack upon him by a foxhound on the way.

The view from River Hill is delightful, ranging across the wooded valley of the Medway to the heights where Tunbridge Wells is situated. So wooded is it that even Tonbridge itself, near at hand, is invisible, and the little village of Hildenborough—with scarcely more houses to it than there are letters in its name—might be non-existent.

A green, smiling woodland vale : just that. Not a profound, romantic depth, but a widespread, all-embracing view of meadows, corn-fields, parks, and hop-gardens : suave, well-ordered, appealing even more to the farmer than to the landscape-painter. Such is the Weald of Kent. Remote from the vulgar herd, who—

“Gawblimee !”

“What was that ? Hark ! there it is again.”

“Strewh ! ‘Fyaint leff me blooming pipe beyine.”

“Leavyer bloomined beyine nex’ time, fatted.”

“Garn, fatted yer bloomin’ self.”

Hop-pickers, tramping and quarrelling their way down to the Kentish hop-gardens. And not always quarrelling, for their moods are even as those of an April day, wherein sunshine and clouds are for ever alternating. Listen to them as they

go “ piping down the valley wild, singing songs of pleasant glee” :

Skoylork, skoylork, upin ther skoy so oi,
If ermong ther aingils muvver you should see,
Awsk 'er if she'll come dahn agine
To pussy, daddy, an' me.

Here are your true sentimentalists.

At the foot of the hill lies Hildenborough, a tiny hamlet with a modern church, until comparatively recent years figuring merely as Hilden, or Hilden Green. The meaning of “Hilden” is obvious here. It is simply descriptive of the situation of the place: in the dene, or valley, beneath River Hill.

Borough, as commonly understood, is a ridiculous misnomer in this place, but it appears to have been brought into use as some way of indicating the existence here of a manor separate from, and independent of, Tonbridge, whose suburban houses now begin to mingle with it.

XXIII

THE town of Tonbridge lies in the valley of the Medway, and the river itself runs through what is now the centre of the borough. Originally, however, the town was situated on the north bank only; and all that portion—now an intimate part of the place—over the bridge was in the open country.

There are but two bridges across the Medway nowadays, one large and one other very small; but in the early days of Tonbridge there were no fewer than five, for if you look at the maps you will perceive the Medway spreading out from Yalding into five tributaries, like the fingers of your hand, over the two miles' breadth of flat country between River Hill and the foothills of Hildenborough and the heights of Somerhill and Quarry Hill, on the way to Tunbridge Wells.

According to some authorities, it was to these bridges that Tonbridge owed its name, but it seems probable that those channels were not bridged, but were merely fords, at the time when the town was baptized; and we must seek for the origin of the name rather in “Ton-burig”—the great Saxon “burh” or artificial mound on which the keep of Tonbridge Castle stood from the earliest times, guarding the passage of the river. Thus the place-name should properly have become “Tonbury,” but the bridges in the meanwhile got themselves built and, becoming the most striking feature of the place, crept illegitimately, at a very early period, into the name of it. In this way we find “Tonebridge” mentioned in 1088, and afterwards meet such variants as “Tunebricgia,” “Tunebregge,” “Tunebrugge,” and “Tonebryge.”

Mediæval Tonbridge was a walled town and moated, both as to town in general and castle in particular. It was, accordingly, in its own special way, as strongly defensible as though situated on some craggy height. You could not come into it

save by water, and not then except by favour and permission of those who guarded the gates.

This stronghold was successively the lordship of the Fitz Gilberts, the great Earls of Clare, the Earls of Gloucester, and the Staffords and Dukes of Buckingham : all of whom were, in respect of it, chief butlers and stewards of his Grace the



TONBRIDGE CASTLE.

Right Reverend Father in God, the Archbishop of Canterbury for the time being. Of those prelates they held the place by the grand sergeantry of serving in those capacities at the enthronisation of their Graces.

Those great earls left nothing to chance. They not only walled and embattled their town, and moated it, but on the prehistoric mound by the

river they reared a keep and around it built a high wall with towers, and moated that as well. This was their castle ; and although the ditches they dug are dried up and filled in, and the walls are for the most part gone, there yet remains the great Gateway of their hold to tell us something of its strength. It is a most worshipful Gateway : strong and tall and massive, so that one cannot, in naming it, do else than give it a capital G. There is scarce a more impressive Gateway in England. It was built somewhere about 1290, in the reign of Edward the First, as the architecture of its great drum-towers shows, and was the last word in massive fortification of that time : the walls ten feet thick and fifty-three feet high, the gloomy entrance arch ribbed with immense ribs of stone, the outer face of the towers relieved only by narrow slits for arrows. The workmanship was superb, and although more than six hundred years have passed since these stones were wrought so well and jointed so neatly, they remain perfect to this day.

There are dungeons in those towers ; there is a hidden watergate to the river ; there is, in fact, every circumstance of romance. Little wonder that in their Castle the lords of Tonbridge felt sometimes defiant. There was, indeed, one lord, Roger de Clare, who, even before this grim Gateway was built, and before his position could be so secure, felt strong enough to defy his liege, to defy even the great Archbishop, Thomas à Becket himself, and to treat his messenger with contempt.

His Grace's pursuivant came with archiepiscopal parchments, formidably engrossed and alarmingly sealed, but what did that haughty castellan do? He made the unhappy man *eat* the documents, "especially," we are told, "the seals." Well for that miserable man that he came merely from the Archbishop, and not with deeds from the King, given under the Great Seal! He survived the light repast, but he could scarce have stomached such a banquet as that would have made.

It would be an unprofitable exercise to trace the ownership of the Castle through the centuries; "suffice it to say," as the Early Victorian novelists were wont to remark—that it came in course of time to one John Hooker. In 1797, that worthy demolished most of it, and with the materials thus obtained built the curious house that now adjoins the Gateway, which he probably would have destroyed as well, but that the work would have been very costly.

Later, the house was a school, to which period, doubtless, the bust of the anonymous tutelary genius over the porch belongs. Quite recently, the Castle has been acquired by the town, and in the beautiful gardens there are flower-shows, and, I believe, even a band-stand and penny-in-the-slot machines.

From the Castle the pilgrim naturally seeks the church, expecting to see many and stately memorials of those ancient lords. But he will find no trace of them. At some remote period,

even before the church was "thoroughly restored" in 1870, improving besoms came and swept them out of existence. We may well pause here and consider with what astonishing completeness things venerable have vanished from Tonbridge. There was once, for example, south of the town, the Augustinian Priory founded by the de Clares. Wolsey seized its revenues and squelched it, on behalf of his proposed "Cardinal College" at Oxford, and the last few remains were abolished in 1839, when the South Eastern Railway came. The goods-station stands on the site.

Tonbridge church is disappointing, and it is not improved by the large churchyard, filled with dense files of tombstones, around it. They are so many that it is impossible to verify the existence of the scandalous epitaph alleged to be there, on a drunkard :

Hail !

This stone marks the spot

Where a notorious sot

Doth lie ;

Whether at rest or not

It matters not

To you or I.

Oft to the "Lion" he went, to fill his horn,

Now to the grave he's gone, to get it warm.

*Beered by public subscription by his hail and stout companions,
who deeply lament his absence.*

The presumption is that it is a sheer invention, like a very large proportion of such things printed in collections of epitaphs.

XXIV

THE general impression of Tonbridge (which elects to spell its "ton" with an "o," in contradistinction from the "u" of Tunbridge Wells) is one of meanness and squalor. There is the fine Grammar School at the entrance to it, and handsome estates



THE "CHEQUERS," TONBRIDGE.

surround the town, but that impression lasts, and seems rather to be intensified by the gradual widening of the High Street and the replacing of the picturesque old houses by flashy modern buildings. That highly sketchable old inn, the "Chequers," remains, and so does the so-styled "Old Ivy House," or "Old Toll House," in East Street, a fine gabled timber-and-plaster building

of the fifteenth century, where the Portreeve's duties, or tolls on cattle and goods entering the town, were paid.

Very observant persons, too, may notice the queer weathervane over the old shop of a firm of furnishing ironmongers, representing an old-fashioned sportsman out with his dog, partridge-shooting. I will not swear it is partridge; it may



A SPORTING WEATHER-VANE.

be grouse, or perhaps even pigeon; but any one will declare it is not a pheasant.

The way out of Tonbridge lies over the railway bridge, past the station, where the banging of trucks and the screaming of whistles are continuous, and South-Eastern trains are, like practical jokers, for ever pretending to go off, just to flurry and excite nervous passengers, and then coming back and casually shunting up and down the sidings when they ought to be miles distant on their journeys; so while away the hours.

Contemplative persons will notice with delight

as they pass that the lamp over the station door says "Railway-station." It is a lesson in the obvious, information for the already fully informed, as little needed as a label on the parish church.

At a very acute angle right and left the roads respectively to Pembury and Tunbridge Wells leave Tonbridge and proceed immediately to climb steep hills out of the Vale of Medway. On the right goes the road to "the Wells," up Quarry Hill, and to the left, up Somerhill, ascends the Hastings Road. At the summit of this very considerable eminence, where a road on the right-hand leads to Tunbridge Wells, once stood the toll-house, known (incorrectly) as Wood's Gate. Its real name was Woodgate, the spot where that early traveller, Mr. Samuel Jeake, lost himself so effectually on that January night of long ago.

Tunbridge Wells is not on the direct road to Hastings, but it gave so distinctive a feature to the first half of the road, and lies so near at hand, that it will simply not be disregarded.

XXV

THE father of Tunbridge Wells was Dudley, Lord North, a dissolute young nobleman, who in 1605 "fell into a consumption," and was advised by his doctors to try the country air and that remedy at the present moment so much talked of but little

practised, unless empty pockets and the lack of credit compel—the “simple life.”

Suffering from “the pleasures of town,” as to whose nature we need not inquire too closely lest we be shocked, my lord resorted to Eridge, on a visit to Lord Abergavenny. But the bracing air did him little good, and he was returning, despondent, to London in his carriage across the then lonely woods and heaths, when he noticed a pool of water by the way, covered with a slimy mineral scum. The idea occurred to him that here was his remedy. He drank of the water, felt better, and returned as soon as possible, to drink again and be well. He clearly did not deserve his good fortune, for he had no sooner recovered his tone than he “again gave himself up to all the gallantries of the age.” But medicinal waters—fortunately—make no discrimination between the deserving and others, and so, by carefully alternating his debaucheries with spells of fresh air and “taking the waters,” Lord North lived to the age of eighty-five, and died in 1666, an example to his fellows of how much you can dare and do if only you do and dare with discretion.

He published a work to show the advantages of the place to his brother libertines, and in this curious book, entitled “A Forest Promiscuous of Several Seasons’ Production,” he in this manner claims their discovery: “The use of Tunbridge and Epsom waters for health and cure I first made known to London and the King’s people. The

Spaw," that is, the Spa in Belgium, "is a chargeable and inconvenient journey to sick bodies, besides the money it carries out of the kingdom and inconvenience to religion. Much more I could say, but I rather hint than handle—rather open the door to a large prospect than give it."

Already, in 1630, twenty-four years after his discovery, he had seen the place stamped with the approval of royalty, when Henrietta Maria, Queen of Charles the First, stayed six weeks here under canvas. It was then quite uncertain what name would find favour among all those proposed for it. "Queen's Wells" was suggested, "Frant Wells," "Speldhurst Wells"; but the circumstances of travel finally resolved the choice. Visitors from London not only approached the health-giving springs by way of Tonbridge, but were originally, in the absolute lack of accommodation, obliged to lodge in that town, nearly six miles distant. Thus the springs, by dint of association, became "Tunbridge Wells," the spot being actually in the three separate parishes of Speldhurst, Frant, and Tonbridge.

That famous promenade afterwards known as the Pantiles was first made in 1638, when the sloping side of a meadow was levelled and embanked to afford a recreative walk for those who took the waters. Two buildings only stood on the spot, the Ladies' and the Gentlemen's Coffee-houses. Things remained very much the same through the long years of the Commonwealth. The "wells" were not deserted, for there

were ailing bodies even among the elect ; but the coffee-houses were not so gay, and the religious cast that came over the scene was reflected in the names then first given to the encircling hills. The Puritans named them after some fancied resemblance to Jerusalem, and thus Mount Ephraim and Mount Sion were christened, and the neighbouring Calverley is in like manner supposed to derive from "Calvary."

With the Restoration "the happy springs of Tonbridge" began to grow merry again, and the card-playing, the dicing, the dancing that were all ended under Puritan rule grew again furious. There was still no town, and the men and women of fashion who did not choose to lodge at Tonbridge had to find rustic accommodation in the cottages of Speldhurst. Presently wooden huts on wheels appeared on the common, and were moved from place to place, as the fancy of the fashionables, playing at rustics, dictated.

To add to the Arcadian delights of that most primitive and pleasant period in the existence of Tunbridge Wells, a daily fair went forward at the spring-head. Rosy-cheeked farmers' daughters brought chickens, cherries, and cream and sold them with great profit to town gallants, much too taken with the unspoiled graces of those rustic beauties to be able to drive bargains ; and soon a bazaar became established under the trees, where milliners designed "rustic" dresses at town prices for ruralising London fair ladies. You might lose or win a fortune at basset under those innocent

trees, and wind up the summer evening with open-air dances on the green. It was the "open-air life," if not the simple one, that then prevailed, and for at least a century that was the especial note of Tunbridge Wells. Evelyn describes it as "a very sweet place, private and refreshing," but



CHURCH OF KING CHARLES THE MARTYR.

that privacy may be questioned, for when houses were so few it was impossible to be other than public, and at a later period, when the town came into existence around the spring, it was especially ordained by the autocratic Nash that "every visitor should live in public."

One of the earliest evidences of the per-

manence of this settlement was the building of a chapel, in 1684. This is the existing church, dedicated by the then descendant Royalists to "King Charles the Martyr." It and the Pantiles—and of course the Common—are the only vestiges of the Tunbridge Wells of that time.

It is to Queen Anne that we owe the name of the Pantiles. She had come here while still the Princess Anne, for the health of herself and her ailing son, the Duke of Gloucester, and gave a hundred pounds for paving the walk, so that no other little boy, duke or commoner, should stumble there, as hers had done. When she returned, the next season, her hundred pounds had been expended in some mysterious way totally unconnected with pavements, and so, very rightly offended, she left the place, never to revisit it, even though the authorities at last hastened to lay the walk with those pantiles that gave it so distinctive a title. Stone slabs, in 1793, replaced those red tiles, and for a lengthy period the stupidity of the local governing body rechristened the famous walk "the Parade," but it has now reverted to its original style.

XXVI

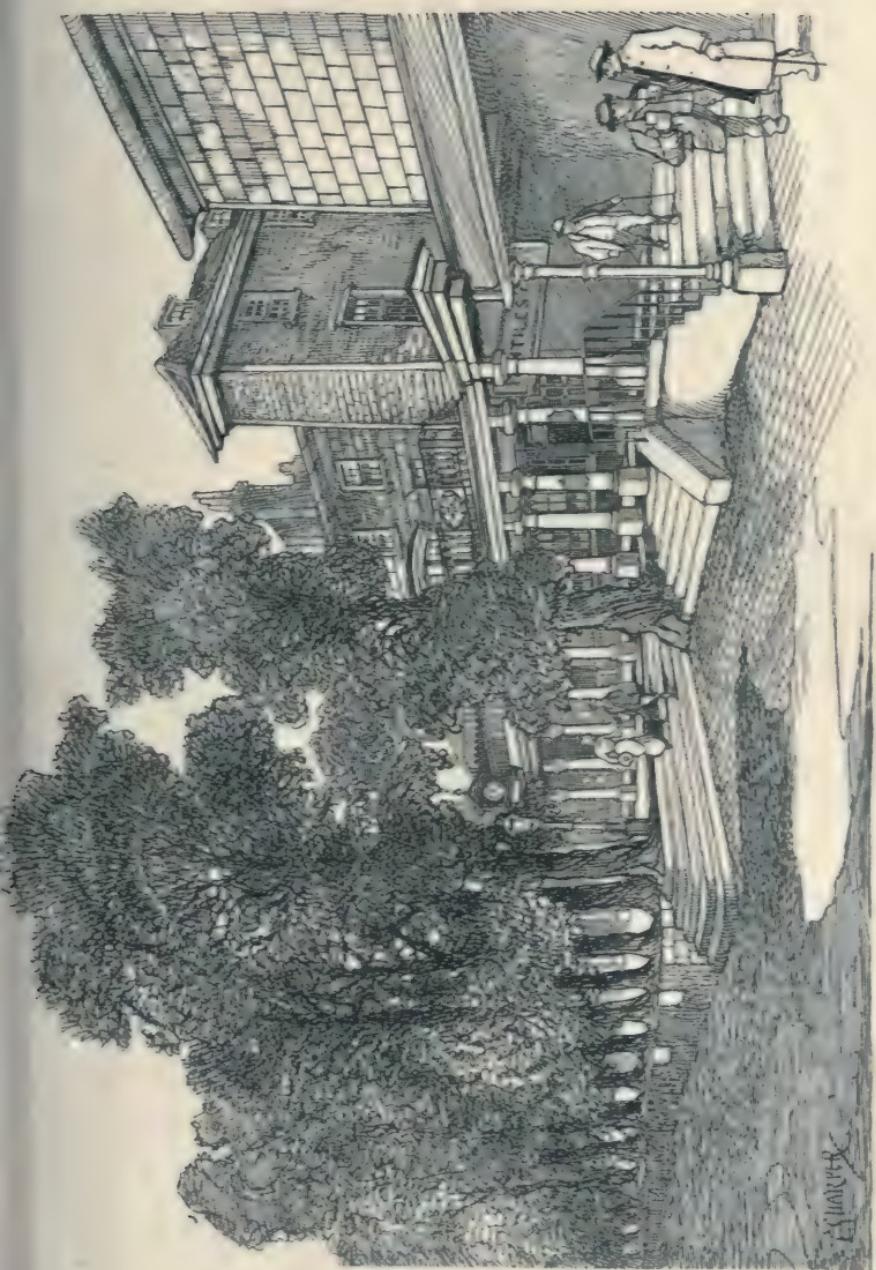
TUNBRIDGE WELLS of to-day bears not the slightest resemblance, apart from these three landmarks of Church, Common, and Pantiles, to the resort of long ago. It is unlike in appearance

and manners. To-day you see an overgrown town with suburban roads climbing up all the hillsides, and continued, if you explore them, on the corresponding descent. It is an effect of grey sobriety, for the greatest period of its expansion was in the '60's and '70's, when plaster was prevalent; and its chief hotel was built in the days before architects could be made to understand that comfort is desired by guests more than grandeur. To climb up flights of stairs to enter the front door is a weariness, and bedrooms twice as lofty as they are broad or long outrage one's sense of proportion.

Socially, too, Tunbridge Wells of to-day is the antipodes of what it was. The traveller of old who "took the waters," presently arriving "by the grace of God," in his chariot, or by public coach, did no sooner come up from Tonbridge within sight of the Spa, than he was assailed by a swarm of touts who thrust their heads into the windows, eager to bespeak his custom :

Soon as they set eyes on you, off flies the hat :
Does your honour want this? does your honour want that?

To-day you enter from the railway-station, and the only people who take any interest in you are the cabmen. That is distinctly a gain, for touts are an abomination ; but the public life once insisted upon by Nash is as distinctly a loss. The fact is that the English have no genius for it, and the climate really forbids. Moreover the local



THE PANTILES, TUNBRIDGE WELLS.

conditions are different. It is a great residential town now, and visitors are in the minority.

Still you see the Pantiles, with the quaint colonnade and the overshadowing limes, now grown very reverend trees indeed, but it is not a scene of gaiety, and when on summer nights the place is beautifully illuminated with coloured electric lights, and open-air concerts are held there, it is a crowd of servants and of shopkeepers' assistants that listens.

Alas! for the red-heeled, red-faced voluptuaries, the patched and powdered beauties, the morris-dancers, the fiddlers! They have all danced or hobbled off, and have been long since ferried over to the other side of Styx. And where they leered and ogled and minced, "protested," and "stopped their vitals," in their eighteenth-century way, there are a few inquisitive tourists peering about in corners, and really wondering if all those tales of old are so much moonshine.

The waters of Tunbridge Wells and the Roman Catholic clergy have, according to Mrs. Malaprop, one quality in common: both are "chalybeate." Perhaps they owed much of their old-time popularity to being described as "salutiferous," and certainly they were likely to impress people more, and to do more imaginary good, under that title than if merely "health-giving."

But the good wrought by the water is undoubtedly. It will not mend broken bones, nor set up an altogether shattered constitution; it is not Lethean, and at a draught you do not forget

sorrows ; but it is an excellent tonic, and—*experto crede*—good for incipient dyspepsia. Modern scepticism looks upon the fine air of Tunbridge Wells, rather than the water, as author of the beneficial effects upon visitors, and so it is less taken than formerly. It is safe to say that the majority of those who taste it are impelled by curiosity, and to all the taste suggests ink.

You come past the Church of King Charles, with its sundial inscribed, “ You may Waste but cannot Stop me,” to the Pantiles and the spring. The water is, by an old Act of Parliament, free to all, but there are two granite basins : one, with a gigantic utensil like a pantomime soup-ladle, with which, bending down, you scoop up the water, in company with Lazarus and the vulgar herd ; another where, in more genteel fashion, you pay a penny and are handed a glassful by one of the two old ladies known as “ Dippers.” If you please, you can commute your payments by subscribing 2s. a week, 3s. 6d. for two weeks, or 30s. for a year. By that time the three grains of iron contained in every gallon of the water should have strung the participant up to concert-pitch, and have plated his teeth with a coating of iron, unless he adopts the old custom of cleaning them with sage-leaves, after drinking.

XXVII

No one would dream of describing Tunbridge Wells as a “manufacturing town,” but it has, and has had for considerably over two hundred years, a peculiar industry. Few are those who have not heard of “Tunbridge ware,” a species of delicate inlay work in coloured woods, which may be described as mosaic work, something in the nature of tessellated pavement reduced to terms of wood ; the tesseræ in this case being very thin strips, fillets, and roundels applied in patterns to work-boxes, inkstands, backs of brushes, and a large variety of fancy articles.

Any attempt to describe the ware, or the process of its manufacture, seems at the first blush a rather hopeless enterprise. We may, however, give another analogy, and compare it with parquetry flooring in miniature and in many colours.

That it is no mushroom fashion may be discovered by the visitor to South Kensington, who in the Museum will discover a backgammon-board designed by the Comte de Grammont and made for him in 1664. He presented it to Mary Kirke, Maid of Honour to the Queen of Charles the Second, during a royal visit to “the Welles.” This interesting evidence of the antiquity of the ware is decorated with forget-me-nots, interlacing the Count’s initials and those of Mary Kirke, and shows that the art was even then fully developed.

Fashions change, and in all those years Tun-

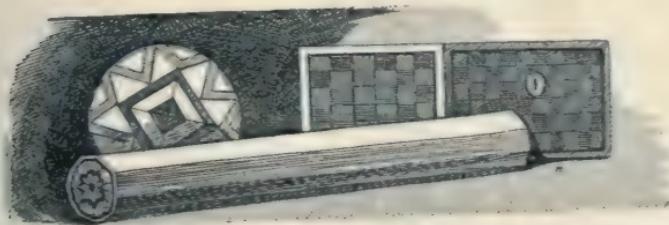
bridge ware has had many vicissitudes. In the beginning of Queen Victoria's reign a very large trade was done in a cheap line of articles in light woods—commonly sycamore—printed upon from transfers, not inlaid in any way, and thus, strictly speaking, not the true ware at all. Examples of this period are still to be met with in curiosity shops, with views, not only of Tunbridge Wells, but of every other place then of popular resort, and the sight of them brings faint reminiscences of times when girls wore bonnets and book-muslin dresses and gentlemen still dared to appear in public in white duck trousers. The ware of that age was, in fact, as popular then as the little fancy china articles with local armorial bearings are now.

That fashion passed, and the true manufacture regained its vogue. The prominent makers for generations had been Fenner & Nye, established on Mount Ephraim in 1720, succeeded in turn by Edmund Nye, and finally by Thomas Barton, in 1863. Barton's showrooms were in the Pantiles until recent years, but the business, conducted on the old time-honoured lines of making the best possible article and charging for it accordingly, could not survive the modern rage for cheapness at the sacrifice of excellence, and as Barton grew old the business declined with him and finally gave place to another, where you can still purchase Tunbridge ware in innumerable forms at popular prices, and be perfectly satisfied, until it is compared with that of sixty years ago. The public has no cause for complaint. It pays only for what

it gets ; but there is, and can only be, the most superficial resemblance between the costly work of a bygone age and that of the present era.

A partial knowledge of these things has led some writers to describe this manufacture as a "doomed industry" ; but, like so many "doomed" people, institutions, and trades, it maintains an astonishing vitality, and there is probably more Tunbridge ware made now than in the times when an article cost twice as much.

The methods employed are of some interest.



TUNBRIDGE WARE.

Radiating, star-like patterns are produced ingeniously by building up in long sticks glued together around a central core, afterwards to be sawn off in veneer-like strips : a hundred to a stick. These are then mounted on to the articles to be decorated. In the case of more ambitious and pictorial efforts, such as a view of the Pantiles (a favourite subject) in coloured woods, the craftsman works to a coloured sketch, divided up like a Berlin wool pattern. In such cases the little wooden cubes are of necessity extremely minute. Mounted on to the wooden surface of workbox or other article, the work has then to undergo

many sandpaper scrubbings, with sandpaper of increasing fineness, and is at last polished to an exquisite finish.

To the true artistic eye these ingenious imitations of drawings or paintings scarcely commend themselves, and Tunbridge ware finds its best exposition in the boxes inlaid with squares of various woods, in which you can see the grain and colour natural to each.

Great expense and care were formerly taken to secure beautiful varieties of wood, and no fewer than eighty, English and foreign, were in constant use. It was found that no wood naturally gave green or silver-grey, and it was therefore necessary to procure those colours artificially. Green was obtained from "decayed oak," the fallen boughs of oak-trees stained green by fungoid growths. To get grey, bird's-eye maple and Hungarian ash were steeped in the chalybeate waters of "the wells"; and a beautiful white was produced by boiling holly.

XXVIII

THE fine upland Common of Tunbridge Wells is one of the town's greatest assets. Extraordinary outcrops of rock occur on it, and away to where it merges into Rusthall Common is that bourne of many a pilgrimage—the famous Toad Rock : an immense mass of sandstone really very like a toad squatting on its haunches, and not by any means



THE TOAD ROCK.

C. Stapp

of so uncertain a shape as that of so many of those queer rocks in which you see just what you please, like Hamlet's cloud, "almost in shape of a camel," "like a weasel," and finally "very like a whale." The Toad Rock has not so many imaginary incarnations, and looks only like a toad. In these days it has been found necessary to protect it with a defensive iron railing, but this precaution has not served to exclude the usual fools who carve their folly deeply into everything capable of being marked with a penknife.

The natural gorge close by, known as Gibraltar Rocks, still is marked by one of the houses built on the Common by a sentimental English Government for the French priests exiled from France at the Revolution. In addition, the Government made them an allowance for their maintenance.

The population of Rusthall, to judge from the language and behaviour of its boys and young men, must be in a very primitive stage of civilisation. The stupid foulness and vileness of their conduct in the neighbourhood of that public resort, the Toad Rock, any day and every day deserve the attention of the police.

Tunbridge Wells is a neighbourhood of rocks, but none others approach the weird scene at the spot appropriately called High Rocks, less than two miles distant, on the way to Groombridge. It is *not* the "Finest Scenery in England," as claimed by Mr. Thomas Coster, proprietor of the "High Rocks Hotel," who charges sixpence to enter; but it is highly curious. Many ingenious

and enterprising sightseers, chiefly active cyclists, resenting the being clicked through a turnstile at sixpence a head, take Mr. Coster and his encircling



SCENE AT "HIGH ROCKS."

fences in the rear, and, entering a little wood, insinuate themselves into his domain and see his rocks for nothing. His rocks! On the whole,

their enterprise has my respectful admiration, for it seems absurd to treat Nature as if she had made this scene in the infancy of the world for the purpose of providing a showman with an income.

The writer of a guide-book published in 1810 describes the "High Rocks" as "romantic scenery," and says that, "combining with the wish to please and be pleased," the spot "tended to create an agreeable relief to that taedium which

will frequently encroach on a place of public resort." There is a specious plausibility about this which leads the reader at first to idly agree; but the muzziness of thought and woolliness of expression very soon lead one to the opinion that the writer, although he may have

THE MARQUIS OF ABERGAVENNY'S "A."

had an inkling of what he meant when he set out, very soon lost himself on the way.

The High Rocks cover a space of about two acres, and consist of a great wooded bluff hanging, cliff-like, over the road, and intersected in innumerable directions with fissures, gullies, and ravines from fifty to seventy feet deep. These ravines are crossed by numerous wooden bridges, and ascended or descended by rustic stairs. There is the Bell Rock, which gives forth a metallic sound when struck ; the Warning Rock, and all sorts of other rocks, fantastically named ; and there are swings and brake-loads of excursionists, and



mazes. Altogether, the place is pretty well exploited, and the penknife has been busy on every spot within reach.

A way to Hastings by Tunbridge Wells lay in coaching days through Frant, Wadhurst, and Ticehurst, emerging upon the direct road again at Stone Crouch. It is a wildly beautiful wooded



THE NEVILLE GATE, FRANT.

district, passing through a line of country where an immense upholstered letter A is noticeable on almost every cottage, sometimes in company with the Neville portcullis, indicating the ownership of the Marquis of Abergavenny in the country-side. Near Frant an extraordinary gateway into the park of Eridge abuts upon the wayside, flanked

by his Bull's Head crest and adorned with the punning motto, *Ne vile relis*: “Wish nothing base.” A proud motto, woefully smirched by Lord William Neville in recent years, when he was sentenced to a term of imprisonment for forgery.

XXIX

THE main road is more quickly regained at Pembury Green, where the last suburbs of Tunbridge Wells end.

Pembury Green is an old hamlet reared in modern times up to the status of a separate parish, with a tall-spired church built where it has no business to be—on the green that gives the place its distinguishing name. There are plenteous evidences, in the number of inns and Cyclists' Rests, that Pembury Green is a favourite resort in the long days of summer.

The number of refreshment places along the Hastings Road catering for cyclists is more marked than even on that very much exploited highway, the road to Brighton. Perhaps on a road so hilly as this those pushers of the reluctant pedal require more frequent halts and more sustenance.

Most wayside inns nowadays express their readiness to entertain wheelmen by exhibiting the modest announcement, “Accommodation for Cyclists,” hinged on to their old signs; but, apart from these, the keeping of “Cyclists' Rests” along the main roads has become an industry as congested as the close professions.

The natural history of Cyclists' Rests affords interest to the peripatetic philosopher. They range from the cheap boudoir-like kind, a couple or so miles out from a town, where the articles most in demand are weak tea and hairpins, down to the sometimes bare, sometimes grubby little dens in remoter places, labelled in illiterate fashion,

"CYCLIST REST"

designed to suit the shallow pockets of the long-distance-riding club cyclist; where, in discomfort, you eat off delf plates laid on tables covered with slimy "American cloth," and get a good "blow-out" and a shakedown in an attic with precipitous floor and sloping roof for an incredibly small sum.

The first variety are fully furnished for feminine cyclists with materials for tea, with the hairpins already mentioned, with chocolates, a carafe of weary-looking home-made lemonade with a lemon stuck in the neck of it, the usual fizzy "minerals," and sixpennyworth of buns. Wonders may be wrought on a basis so slight.

The other kind is of sterner stuff. Who rides far must feed well. Tea for the hard rider, no less than for the ambling lady cyclist, is essential, but it must be tea with a tang to it, and plenty of it; and it gets mixed, in course of feeding, with such meats as the "Rest" affords, with the result—a medical expert would say—that the interior of that cyclist is converted into a tannery, and his food turned to leather by the tannic acid of his

drink. And yet I never heard of a healthy, active cyclist being inconvenienced, much less laid low, by such immoral feeding.

It is a solitary road beyond Pembury Green, varied only by a few scattered houses, all the way to Lamberhurst. Kipping's Cross is the first of



THE "BLUE BOYS" INN.

these intervals, and there stands the "Blue Boys" inn, with an oast-house for only neighbour. The "Blue Boys" is practically dated by its odd picture sign, showing two blue-jacketed postboys shaking hands and lifting each a convivial glass, whether to their noble selves or to George the Fourth, whose medallion portrait is below, cannot be said.

Beyond the inn is the cross-road leading to Goudhurst, scene of many incidents in the history of smuggling. Between this point and Lamberhurst, four miles distant, there were, in the once-upon-a-time of coaching days, two turnpike-gates. The pikeman's house remains at both places.

The level tract of land at this point was known to old road-books as "Lindridge Causeway," and owed its name, according to John Harris, who wrote a "History of Kent" in 1719, to one Lindridge, who was born in 1566, lived in a house adjacent to Lamberhurst, and "built a handsome causeway here, called after him." At that time there was still a stone to his memory in the porch of Lamberhurst church.

The name of "Lamberhurst Quarter," given to the district on this hill-top above Lamberhurst village, is one of those many mysteries of place-names that now can never be authoritatively explained; but it is supposed to derive from some ancient partition of the manor into four parts—quarters of a knight's fee.

Down below, on the right hand, are spread out the many-serried ranks of the hop-gardens. You look down upon them as a commanding officer might upon his phalanx battalions.

XXX

HOPS are grown in the neighbourhood of Lamberhurst almost as extensively as around Maidstone itself, which every one knows to be the metropolis

of the cultivation. The hop-gardens are the vineyards of England, and so marked a feature that it surprises the inquirer who learns that the brewer's hop was not introduced to this country until the reign of Henry the Eighth. "Hops and heresy came in together," the Roman Catholics were wont to remark.

There is no certainty about hops, and a hop-grower will readily admit that his trade is little better than gambling. Knowledge, capital, industry are all insufficient to arm him against fate in the shape of red spider, mould, fly, or bad markets, and he is commonly content if he can secure one good crop at average prices in three years. It is a costly cultivation, coming, with rent, rates, taxes, materials, and labour, to an average of £25 per acre.

Only land "just so" will serve. A little too heavy, a little too light, or not being drained to perfection, will spell failure, and a hop-garden must be drained, with pipes or tiles, at least as well as a house.

The hop-grower's year begins in March, when the "hills," or stools, are uncovered and dressed by pruning. Then the poles are set up: from two to four to each "hill." The "hills" being six feet apart, it is a simple calculation to arrive at the number of poles to the acre. There are 3,600, forming a considerable item in the grower's accounts. Made of ash, alder, chestnut, larch, or oak, of from ten to twelve years' growth, the great and constant demand for them has given

their characteristic appearance to large tracts of land in Kent and Sussex, where the young woodlands are as much a feature as the hop-gardens and the oast-houses themselves. Poles are from thirteen to fourteen feet long, and cost from twelve shillings to a guinea a hundred, larch being the most lasting. To preserve them as long as possible, they are often dipped in creosote.

Early in May the hop-gardens begin to give employment to the women. The young shoots are tied with rushes to the poles, and constantly thinned out, and the poles themselves tied together with a maze of interlacing string for the support of the climbing bine.

All through the summer the alleys between the plants must be kept well weeded, and only when August ends does the grower begin to see his reward in sight; but then rain may bring the "mould," or the "fly" may come, and all his toil be wasted. Only one thing will cure the "fly," and that is something utterly beyond control—the coming of the "ladybird."

Most people know the ladybird or "lady-cow," as it is sometimes called: the little winged insect with the hard shell of a post-office red, subject of the old rustic rhyme, in which, placing it on the tip of the finger, it would be addressed in this wise:

Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home:
Your house is all burnt, and your children all gone.
Little pop-pop sits on the cold stone,
Crying for mammy, and mammy don't come.

I heard that rhyme very early, and shall never quite lose the forlorn sense of tragedy in it.

The ladybird is the deadly foe of the "fly," and seems by some extraordinary instinct to know when and where that pest is rampant; for there is nothing more certain than that a plague of "fly" will be followed by an incursion of ladybirds in countless millions, coming even across the Channel, as steamboat passengers, plentifully covered with them, have testified. The sky rains ladybirds, come vengefully to exterminate the hop-grower's enemy and to ensure that British beer shall be properly bittered.

If the hops survive all these dangers and chances and are a generally abundant crop, the grower is sometimes in almost as bad a case as if they had been a failure, for prices then rule so ruinously low that they do not pay the cost of growing. Hops have been so high as £25 a hundredweight in times of scarcity, when those fortunate enough to be favoured with a good crop, while their neighbours' were failures, have retired with fortunes. On the other hand, they have been so low as fifty shillings.

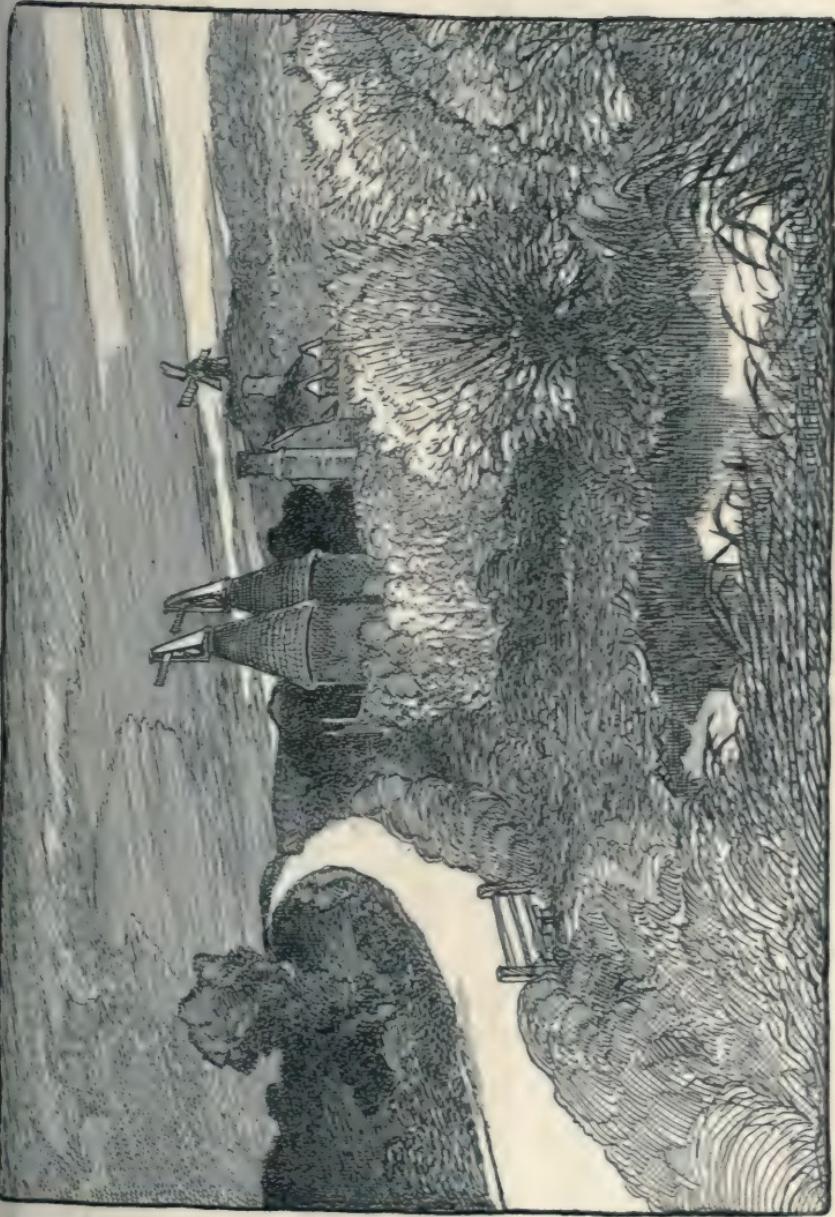
A less anxious, but infinitely more busy time has come when the picking arrives. Responsible gangers have to be employed, and hop-cutters. The hop-cutter cuts through the bines, pulls up the poles, and lays them across the bins of sacking into which the pickers strip the flowers of the hop. The ganger measures out the stripped hops, and in his note-book credits each picker with the

amount of his picking, at the rate of eight bushels a shilling.

The hopper's hut is not the last word in convenience, although for the occasion, and by way of change from the hopper's native slum, it may be comfortable enough. It is usually one of a long row of little brick dens, not altogether unlike some of the wild animals' lairs at the Zoölogical Gardens, and is whitewashed inside in the manner of a cattle-pen. There are—is it necessary to add?—no pictures on the walls and no domestic knick-knacks. There is not even any furniture, nor a bed. If you are a hopper you doss on the floor, luxuriating in clean straw provided by the hop-grower, and wrapped in the not over-clean blankets brought by yourself; and you and yours “clean yourselves”—in these circles you do not merely “wash”—in the open, at buckets and tins. In the open, too, you dress and get shaved, and cook and eat; and if the August and September days be kind, there is enjoyment rather than discomfort in it. Sometimes barns and tents supplement the huts: sometimes, too, it rains, and then, on a really wet day, when work is at a standstill and the women and the children are miserable and sulky and cry, the male hopper—who, although as a rule he uses dreadful language, is not a bad fellow at heart—goes off to the nearest pub. and soaks on four-ale, and there is trouble.

There are, every year, some 50,000 hop-pickers, picking from 35,000 to 40,000 acres of hop-gardens. Of these the larger proportion is contributed by the

KENT.



villagers ; but the railways convey about 20,000 from London by the "hopper specials" at very low rates, and many, who cannot afford even those very cheap fares, tramp down.

The special trains would make the patrons of the Continental expresses stare. They set out at midnight, or thereabouts, and are filled with a motley crowd, bringing mattresses, blankets, frying-pans, kettles, and a host of small domestic requirements for a fortnight or three weeks.

They book to whatever station they fancy as the likeliest point whence to seek a job ; for while some hop-pickers, during a steady succession of years, know where they will be welcome, many of them go on sheer speculation, and tramp from village to village until they find vacancies. In later years, and in bad or wet seasons, the number of the unsuccessful claiming admission at the casual wards, especially at Maidstone, has seriously embarrassed the workhouse authorities and those good folk who not only missionise the hoppers with Bible and Prayer Book, but feed and clothe their bodies in this world as well as showing anxiety for their souls in the next.

Hop-picking is for many poor Londoners the only holiday they get throughout the year. It is that best of holidays, change of work and of scene. Its chief merits are that it requires no skill, and that the whole family can take part in it, except the baby, who is at any rate brought into the hop-garden to look on, and left to amuse himself or to sleep under an umbrella, while grandfather, grand-

mother, father, mother, uncles and aunts, and brothers and sisters are all busily filling the bins and earning, according to their degrees of "slippiness," a shilling to two shillings the day.

Each hop-grower is his own dryer: hence the kilns, the strangely cowled "oast-houses" attached to every hop-garden. To these the hops are taken, to be dried. Most oast-houses are circular, that form being considered to distribute the heat more evenly than the square. The interior is instructive, and would not be at all unwelcome on one of those wet and chilly days that are not unknown to the English summer, were it not for the universal practice of mixing sulphur with the coke fires, which, to a stranger, results in an inconvenient hoarseness and sore throat. The reason for the sulphur is that the fumes it throws off give a yellowish colour to the dried hops, a tint conventionally required by the factors, although it makes them neither better nor worse.

The fires are on the ground level. Above, the hops are spread on the drying-floor, formed of wire-netting, covered with hair-cloth. Through this the warm air ascends, and in twelve hours some 1,050 lb. weight of hops are dried, and incidentally reduced by the evaporation of the moisture in them to 200 lb. The heat ascends and leaves the oast-house by the cowl, which turns on bearings, according to the direction of the wind.

From the drying-floor to the cooling-floor the hops are transferred with a wooden shovel, and

then packed into the “pockets.” “Pockets” are sacks, and are nowadays filled by being suspended from a hole in the floor, and filled with the light feathery dried hops; and then repeatedly pressed down, re-filled and re-pressed by a heavy iron screw-press. In the result, a pocket of hops is as hard and unyielding to the touch as a mass of iron, and samples cut from it hold together like so much cake-tobacco. The older method of packing was for a “jumper” to press the hops down by his own unaided efforts.

XXXI

THOSE who would find Lamberhurst church must diligently seek it, for it lies quite away from the village, on the hill-top, beside the manor-house, which you approach past a long line of pyramidal yew-trees, so like those of toy Noah’s Arks that you look instinctively for their wooden stands.

Like most manor-houses in Kent, this is styled the “Court Lodge.” The Court Lodge itself is a stone building of considerable age, with the desolating gaunt exterior of a workhouse; and the church, standing behind it, is in appearance—and in some sort in fact—an appanage of the lord of the manor, for it stands, with the residence, in the middle of his park.

It is a very charming old church, with a shingled spire, and deeply embowered in dark heavy trees, as though Nature herself had put on

a solemn mood, in deference to the spirit of the place. Most prominent in the approach is a fine eighteenth-century monument, like a tea-caddy, with an epitaph starting off suddenly in this wise :

Virgil Pomfret, Gent
Liv^d so Respected
That when the Sable Train of Mourning Friends
Attended his breathles Corps
Here to be Entomb^d
Each tear ful Eye seem'd thus to Say
There Goes an Honest Man

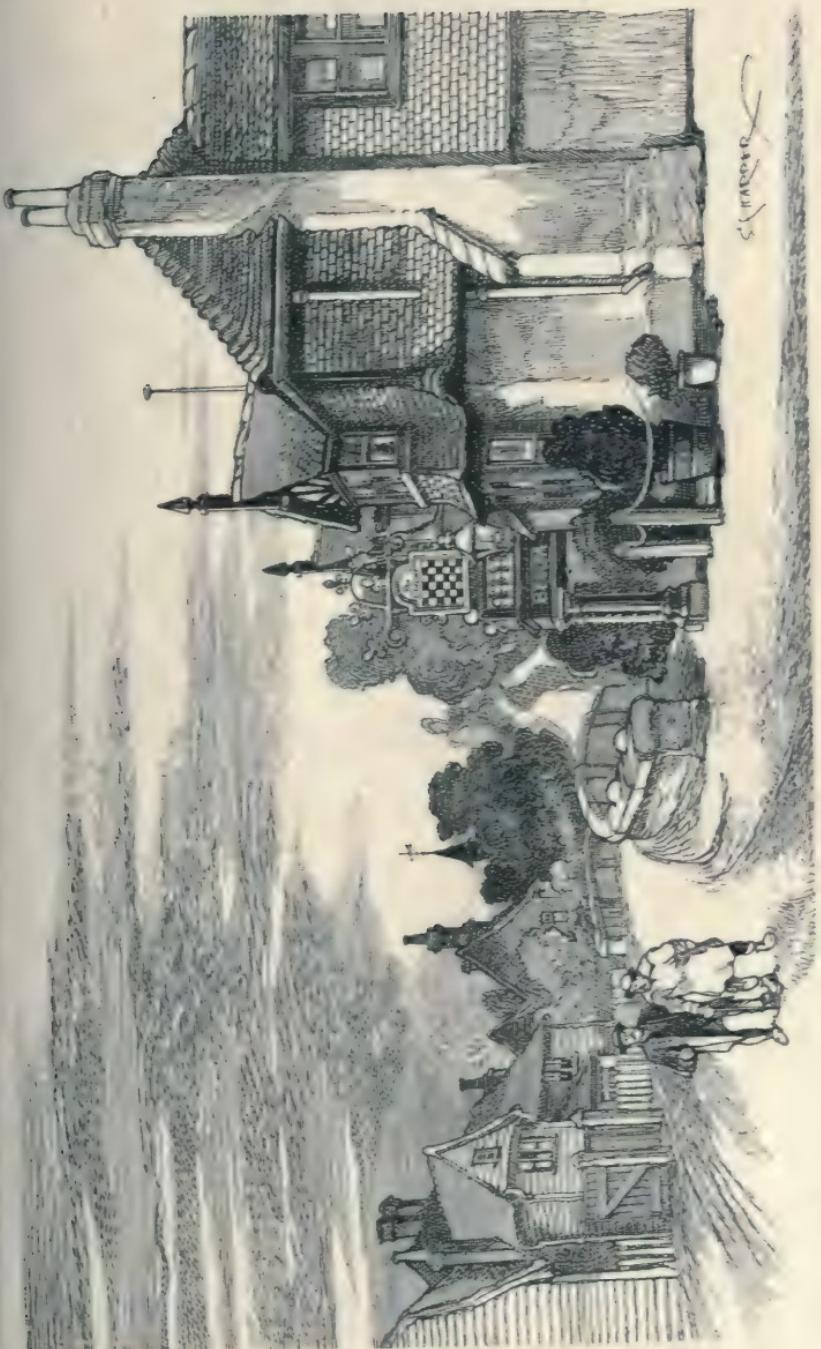
1765 Aged 77

This is followed by an inscription stating how Virgil Pomfret's wife was "Virtuous and Discreet," and this by another that tells us how, in the same year, Virgil Pomfret, junior, was "snatch'd away By the Small Pox," aged 28.

I think it gives that dreadful disease an added terror to personify it in this larcenous way.

At the foot of the hill lies quiet, beautiful Lamberhurst. Mr. Rudyard Kipling has not inaptly named it "Slumberhurst," and Cobbett, not given to indiscriminate praise, spoke of it as "a very pretty place, lying in a valley with beautiful hills round it."

Old writers gave it as their opinion that the place-name came from "the Anglo-Saxon *Lam*, meaning 'loam,'" and supported their contention by referring to the sticky clay of the neighbourhood; but Lamberhurst probably took the first part of its name from the Saxon genitive plural for lambs. The second part means, of course, a



LAMBERTURST.

wood. Most surrounding places take their names, in this manner, from natural objects.

Kent and Sussex here march together, and the village was, until 1894, in both counties, the dividing-line being the little river Teise that flows under the picturesque and narrow bridge in the village street. In that year, however, Lamberhurst was transferred wholly to Kent. The old "Chequers" inn, type of an old English hostelry, has lately been neighboured by an upstart hotel, disturbing with its raw newness the ancient peace of this Sleepy Hollow.

It was once a busy enough place, and black and smoky, for close by were the famous furnaces, or "bloomeries," where iron-ore was smelted and cannon cast, and where the famous iron railings that now partly, and once wholly, surrounded St. Paul's Cathedral, were made. Great outcry was made when the railings were removed from the west front of the cathedral in 1873, but we need not lack in admiration of them to realise that the open space thus created is a better sight than the strictly enclosed approach to London's chief place of worship. The railings originally weighed 200 tons, cost £11,202, and were considered to be the finest, as they certainly were the heaviest, in the world.

The site of the furnace is half a mile from Lamberhurst, on the way to Bayham Abbey. It is distinguished by a hammer-pond and a mouldy old house almost smothered in trees and creepers.

Along the valley of the stream that feeds this

pond lie the ruins of Bayham Abbey, a remote home of Premonstratensian Canons, whose simple life was to the last in great contrast with the dissolute conduct of the great majority of the religious houses rightly abolished in the time of Henry the Eighth. But they had to suffer for the sins of the many, and although a crowd of rustics and others of better estate assembled in disguise and reinstated the canons, after they had been



BAYHAM ABBEY: ACROSS THE WATER-MEADOWS.

expelled by the Commissioners, it was only a temporary victory. Abbey and estates fell to Sir Anthony Browne, of whom we shall hear more at Battle; but what became of the wonderful bed upon which the blessed St. Richard of Chichester had slept, history sayeth not. It should have been presented to the most deserving hospital, for it wrought cures upon all who slept in it, no matter what the disease. But the Age of Faith was past, and the Blessed Bed was doubtless

chopped up for firewood and its bedding dispersed : an inestimable loss to an ailing world. Imagine a bed sovran for every ill ! How compute the value of it ?

If the curse upon sacrilege were not such a chancy and fortuitous thing, one might look confidently for terrible happenings to the owners of the Bayham Abbey lands, the Pratts, Marquises Camden, who bought the estates from Viscount Montagu in 1714. But their elephant's-head crest remains on all the cottages for miles around, and they continue to " live long and brosber."

The ruins are visible from the road, lying amid rich water-meadows, and they are to be seen more intimately at the end of a phenomenally muddy lane. But you may not view them from within the enclosure except on one day of the week and at a fee of sixpence.

XXXII

RESTRICTIONS upon sight-seeing in this neighbourhood are particularly severe. On the rising ground out of Lamberhurst, for example, lies Scotney Castle, a lovely, sequestered ruin partly surrounded by a great, lake-like moat, and only a little less romantic than Bodiam itself. To reach it you go past a very modern lodge and along a half-mile of wooded drive, chiefly of laurels and sweet chestnuts. But permission is granted on only one day of the week, doubtless in the hope that the precise

day will not be remembered. On any summer's day numerous vehicles and parties, some of them come from long distances, may be seen turned back by the lodge-keeper.

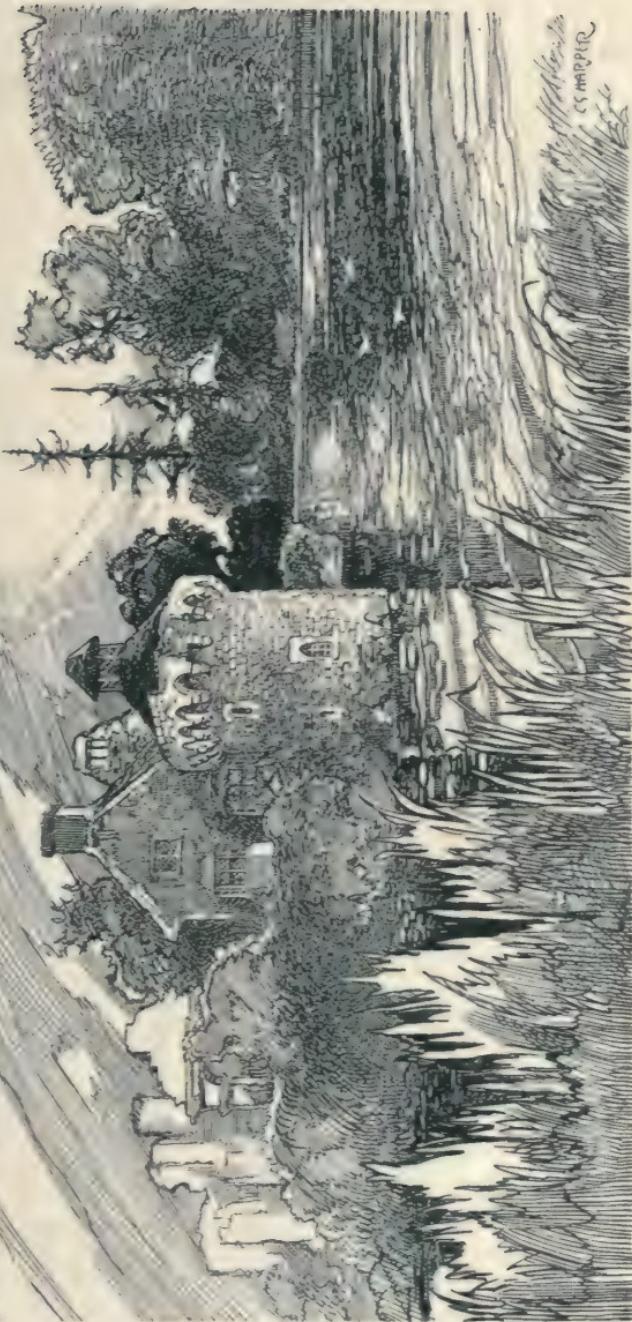
Scotney was ever the home of romance, for one of its earliest owners, Walter de Scotney, was executed at Winchester in 1259 for administering poison to the Earl of Gloucester and others. The humour of it is that Walter de Scotney was probably quite innocent. The Earl recovered, but his brother, William de Clare, died, as also did the Abbot of Westminster. The Earl himself seems to have had a narrow escape, for he lost hair, nails, teeth, and skin, and must have been one vast comprehensive ache, and in a more painful condition than that of a chicken plucked alive.

Scotney then passed to the Darrells, who led a finely dramatic life here until they ended, to an effective and tragical "curtain."

The old castle lies in a watery hollow beneath the modern Gothic mansion, and itself consists of two distinct portions: the castellated building erected about 1418 by Archbishop Chicheley, and the later manor-house of the Darrells, who in Queen Elizabeth's time were Roman Catholics, maintaining their religion and its observances in spite of the laws, ordinances, and penalties levelled against Papist recusants.

To secure their officiating priests against arrest the Darrells contrived a highly ingenious hiding-hole in their mansion, and it was speedily found useful. It was the Christmas night of 1598,

SCOTNEY CASTLE.



towards the end of Elizabeth's long reign, and Father Blount, a well-known and keenly sought priest, was in the house with his servant when the party were surprised by a search-expedition, who, having got wind of Blount's presence, were bent on capturing him.

While the enemy were demanding admittance, Blount and his servant were hurried into the courtyard, where a huge stone in the wall, turning upon a pivot, gave entrance to the hiding-place. Unluckily for them, a portion of a girdle-strap was caught between the stone and the rest of the wall, and showed plainly. Meanwhile the search-party had been admitted, and, securing the inmates of the house in one room, proceeded to search the place.

While they were thus engaged an outside servant of the family chanced to see the girdle, and promptly cut it off, calling as loudly as he dared to the fugitives to pull in the fragment that was still visible. The sharp-eared search-party, hearing a voice in the courtyard, rushed out and sounded the walls all round, without making any discovery, but kept it up until the rain, which had set in, disgusted them, when they retired, intending to resume the search on the morrow.

As Blount's own record of the adventure tells us, he and his servant were concealed for days under a staircase. At last, afraid to risk the result of another day's proceedings, they escaped under cover of night. Barefooted they crossed the court-

yard, climbed the walls and swam the moat, then covered with thin ice. They did well to fly, for next day their hiding-place was discovered.

In later years the castle and manor-house, by that time ruined, was the haunt of smugglers, among whom the Darrells themselves were reputed to be prominent. To-day the beautiful spot is surrounded not only by the moat, but by exquisite gardens. The two remaining towers of the mediæval castle rise picturesquely from the still waters, and within the wreck of the Elizabethan mansion there are rooms contrived for the gamekeeper.

XXXIII

WEIRD oast-houses of a gigantic size raise their lofty cowls against the sky-line outside Lamberhurst, and, with their vanes decorated with images of the Kentish Horse, look like the architecture of Nightmare.

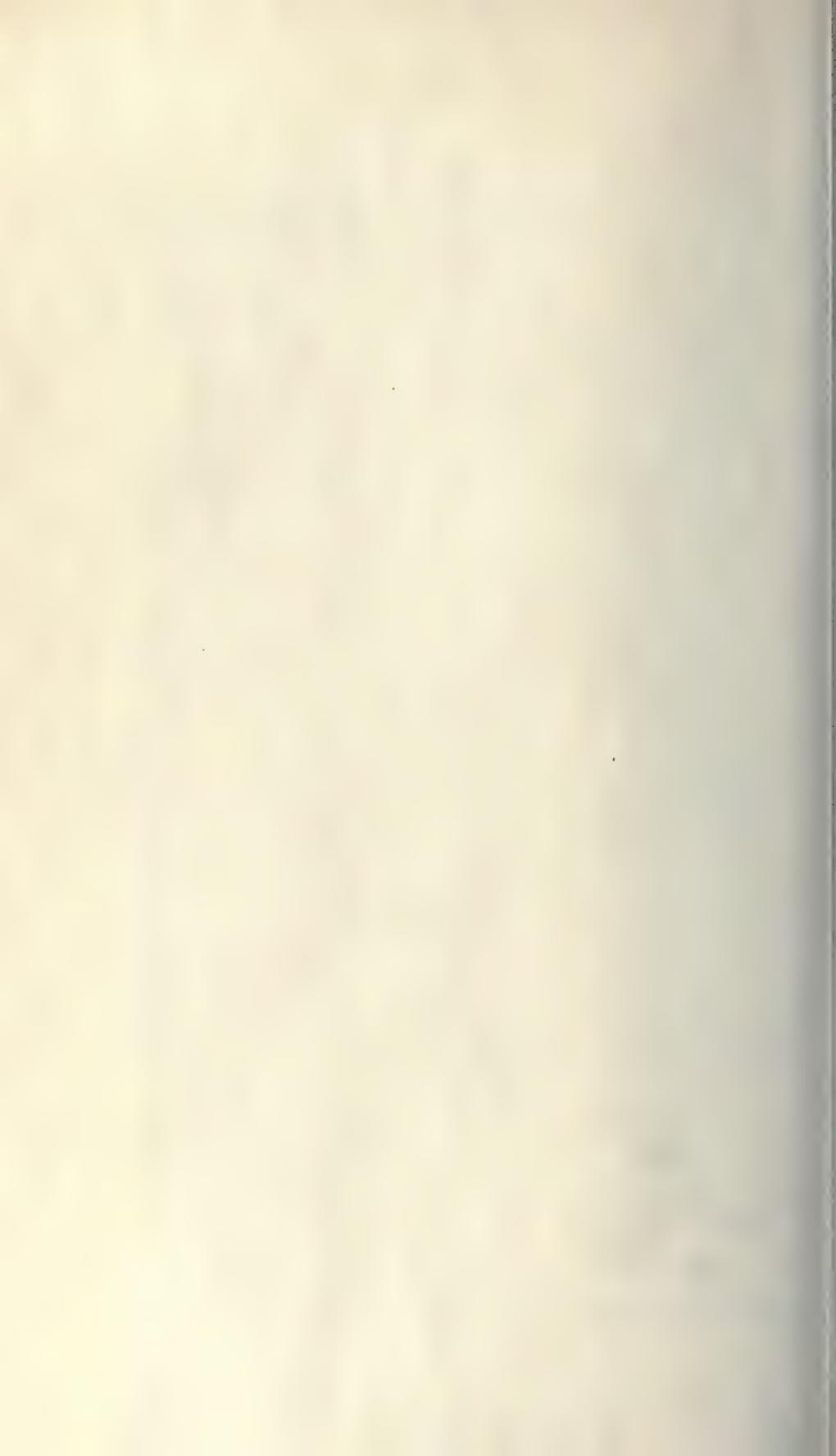
Half a mile onwards, an old toll-house, added to in later years, has the appearance of a lodge. Beyond it, the road has at some distant period been raised from a very deep dingle, as may be judged from the farm in the neighbouring hollow and from the Bewl Bridge, under whose arch the little Bewl stream rushes, with a hoarse voice, far below.

In another mile is Stone Crouch, whose name of "crouch," meaning merely a cross—probably :

WEIRD OAST-HOUSES, LAMBERHURST.

C. S. HARPER





cross-road—prepares one for that most solitary and most rustic hamlet, with a farm-house and its dependent cottages and barns, all in the old Kentish style. The farmhouse was once a coaching inn, and appears to have borne the sign of the “Postboy,” now taken by a house on the way from Lamberhurst, half a mile before the hamlet is reached.

On the left is the great park of Bedgebury, the seat until 1887, when he died, of A. J. B. Beresford-Hope, once prominent in the House of Commons. He was the descendant of one John Hope, a Hollander, of Amsterdam, whose son settled in England about 1800. That origin was the subject of a curious allusion in Parliament, during the debate of April 12th, 1867, on the Representation of the People Bill: a measure vehemently opposed by Beresford-Hope, whose clumsy, burly form and grotesque mannerisms in speaking were often commented upon. He spoke with emphasis of voice and gesture against that proposal of Disraeli's, and declared, rather offensively, that he “would vote with whole heart and conscience against the Asian mystery.”

To this the “Asian mystery” himself rejoined that “all the honourable member's exhibitions in the House are distinguished by a prudery which charms me, and when he talks of Asian mysteries, I may, perhaps, by way of reply, remark that there is a Batavian grace about his exhibition which takes the sting out of what he has said.”

He might even have said batrachian grace,

for Beresford-Hope on his legs in the House was something froglike.

The house at Bedgebury, originally built in 1688 by Sir James Hayes, from sources romantically drawn out of treasure recovered from a sunken Spanish galleon, has been twice remodelled, lastly in the '60's, and is typical of the taste then prevailing for French architecture of what we may term the Alexandra Palace, Grosvenor Place, and Buckingham Palace Hotel type: which is to a Londoner an easier method of comparison than by naming it the "Louis the Fourteenth style." It is a type distinguished by scaly Mansard roofs and spiky crestings, and has long been outmoded.

Beresford-Hope was a connoisseur of sorts, with a ready purse for church-restoration, conducted sometimes with that "zeal not according to knowledge" St. Paul laments, and exemplified in the little church of Kilndown, outside Bedgebury Park.

At Flimwell, which is merely a hamlet at the cross-roads, formed into a parish in 1839 by annexing portions of the neighbouring parishes of Etchingham, Ticehurst, and Hawkhurst, the road finally enters Sussex. "Flimwell Vent" is the style by which the place is known to old Turnpike Acts. The name sounds mysterious, but is only a strangely perverted version of "went," the old rustic word for a cross-road. This, where roads go in four different directions, would be a "four-went way." The draughtsmen who drew up those acts simply did not understand the term, and

spelled it, as Mr. Tony Weller did his name, with a “we.”

The place is not unknown to history. In 1265, Henry the Third having, after a short siege, seized Tonbridge Castle, marched south, and, passing Combwell, a nunnery in the parish of Goudhurst, found the dead body of his cook, Master Thomas, who had incautiously strayed from the main body. According to contemporary records, the enraged King ordered three hundred and fifteen archers to be beheaded “at the place which is called Flimerwelle,” and here accordingly “they were surrounded like so many innocent lambs in a field, and butchered.”

The Angevin kings had no sense of proportion, and a perverted one of justice.

The left-hand road at Flimwell is the way to Rye, leading over what was once the wild and lonely region of Seacox Heath, haunt of the desperate smugglers then infesting this part of the country. The heath is now a thing of the past. Enclosure and farming have abolished it, and perhaps the only fragment of it left is a delightful little patch of brilliant heather preserved in the gardens of Lord Goschen’s mansion of “Seacox Heath.” Portions remain of old buildings once belonging to a house traditionally said to have been used as a warehouse by the half-mythical smuggler, Arthur Grey, but the present house was built in 1871 by Mr. (afterwards Lord) Goschen. It is a rather severe and formal Renaissance building, in a pale yellow sandstone quarried

on the estate, and defies the canons of proportion suited to a country house, running to height rather than ground-space—a fashion imposed in streets where houses are built shoulder to shoulder, but unnecessary and undesirable on sites such as this.

It is a beautiful site; a lofty ridge facing south and overlooking many miles of lovely country. Ornate gardens, in which the most brilliant flowers predominate, surround the house, and beyond them are dense plantations of the choicest conifers, collected from all parts of the world.

Between Flimwell and Hastings, a distance of $18\frac{3}{4}$ miles, there were no fewer than six turnpike-gates levying tribute upon road-users, but in spite of these heavy exactions—perhaps even because of them—the expenditure of the Flimwell and Hastings Turnpike Trust largely exceeded its income, and in 1835 it was £11,000 in debt. In the end Parliament abolished turnpikes, and the bond-holders who had lent money on the security of the tolls and the good faith of the Government lost their capital, not only here but all over the country.

A farm-house one mile on the road beyond Flimwell, with brick-and-tile front and weather-boarded back, and with oast-houses and hop-gardens attached to it, is known, for some inscrutable reason, as “Mountpumps.” In another two miles the road comes to Hurst (*i.e.* Wood) Green.

XXXIV

HURST GREEN is a large hamlet, and an offshoot of Etchingham; created by the road travel of the last hundred years. It is in two most distinct parts: one unmistakably Georgian, the other just as distinctly Late Victorian, shading off into Early Edwardian. Although one continuous street, divided only by a cross-road, the two parts of Hurst Green are very different in appearance, and look so antagonistic that it would not be surprising to learn that the inhabitants of either will have no dealings with those of the other.

The traveller comes first to the more recent portion: very red and raw, and there he finds a reason for much of these developments, in a large and highly ornate Police-station, which is not merely that, but a Court-house as well. Hurst Green, it seems, is the headquarters of a Petty Sessional division of the county of Sussex: much to the advantage of the great neighbouring "George" inn and its rival over the way, the "Queen's Head." When the railway came, and the custom fell off and the great stables were deserted, the two old inns were in grave danger of extinction. Only the Petty Sessions saved the situation. To-day, when the awful majesty of the Bench has dealt with the crimes and misdemeanours of the district—awarding fine or imprisonment for poaching or the juvenile rifling of orchards—the upholders of law and order and the rights of property in ground-game adjourn for

refreshment, and in the “George” drink confusion to the illegal midnight sportsman and the youthful apple-stealers, while the friends and relations of those hardened criminals drown their sorrows at the “Queen’s Head.”

Although the call of nature may be attended to, and thirst and hunger handsomely appeased at Hurst Green, the æsthetic sense is unlikely to be



ETCHINGHAM CHURCH.

full fed. Satisfaction of that kind—but none of the other—is amply obtained at Etchingham, one mile distant, down a bye-road.

Travellers to and from Hastings by South Eastern Railway are familiar with Etchingham, as a place with a station where no train appears ever to stop; and indeed to the ordinary mind there seems, not merely no reason for stopping, but none for a station at all. For Etchingham

is just what you see from the passing train: a great, impressive church, and one or two ancient farmsteads. There was no village when the station was built, in 1847, and the place was, except for that beautiful church and those farms, a solitude. A solitude, too, it remained until 1904, when an entirely new village was begun. There it blooms to-day, in red brick, like a scarlet geranium, and the South Eastern Railway is at last, after close upon two generations, justified of its prescience.

There seems never to have been a village at Etchingham. Only a manor-house of the de Etchinghams; and that disappeared so long ago that little is known of it. Its last traces were erased when the railway came, and the station stands on the site. There is something so typical of the age in that circumstance that one cannot but stand and admire the dramatic completeness, the colossal audacity of it.

But a something greater than the manor-house of those ancient lords remains; in the great church they built. It stands so near the railway that one might pitch a stone from the train into the church-yard; and, as it is one of the finest churches in Sussex, it never fails to hold the glance of those who pass this way. It was built, on the site of an earlier, by Sir William de Etchingham, in 1365, and is a cruciform building, with massive central tower, in the Late Decorated style—that large and bold phase of Gothic which comes between Early English and Perpendicular, and

looks lovingly back upon the grace of the earlier and forward to the lofty emptiness of the later, with a richness of detail peculiar to itself. A special note of this church is the fine tracery of its east window, in the easy flowing style, common in France but comparatively rare in this country,

known as Flamboyant. The low pyramidal spire of the tower still supports the original copper weather-vane, in the form of a banneret displaying the fretty coat of arms of the de Etchinghams, and on the floor of the chancel are the almost life-sized figures, in engraved brass, of the founder himself, and his son and grandson. Sir William, the builder of the church, died in 1387. He still darkly, in obscure Norman-French and black-letter, begs the prayers of all: "I was made and formed of Earth; and now have I returned to Earth. William de



THE ANCIENT VANE,
ETCHINGHAM.

Etchingham was my name. God have pity on my soul; and all you who pass by, pray to Him for me."

If salvation be found in church-building—and there are yet those who seek it that way—then, in those many mansions beyond, William de Etchingham is well-housed, for he built not only a large church, but a beautiful.

He endowed it, too, and the eighteen carved misere stalls yet remain where the priests sang their office. If you turn up those hinged seats, you will find odd carvings on the under side ; among them the biting satire, disloyal in such a place, of the fox in the habit of a priest, preaching to geese.

A tablet on the wall records in Latin that the chancel was restored at the expense of the rector,



Te ferre tu scilicet homine et ea terra in reliquie Vallum de Etchingham
et me nomine domini de qualitate eius prece. Et vobis quia peccata pallere per nos
lalme de meo puris duci prece. Quod de sumere le domini uide et pessima laudis
legione apud vos deus quas vobis oportet come dicas. Volent enim in nocte.

BRASS OF SIR WILLIAM DE ETCHEMINGHAM.

Dr. Hugh Totty, who died, aged 101, in 1857. In the south aisle hangs a tilting-helmet and the erminois banner of Sir George Strode; and a mural monument to Henry Corbould, artist and ancestor of artists, who died, aged 57, in 1844, is a shocking example of "Gothic," as understood towards the middle of the nineteenth century. Even this, however, is not so bad as the tablet,



THE FOX PREACHING TO THE GEESE.

with marble profile portrait medallion, to one "John Snepp, gent," 1823.

The churchyard was once surrounded by a moat, in which, according to an ancient legend, there lay a great bell. How it came there the story did not say; but it was never to be drawn from its hiding-place until six yoke of white oxen should be brought for the purpose. The moat was drained long since; but legend was for once at fault, for no bell was found.

XXXV

RETURNING to Hurst Green, and resisting the temptation to turn aside for the purpose of seeing the farmhouse called "Squibs," we come presently to Silver Hill, an eminence described by Horace Walpole, who in 1752 travelled Kent and Sussex with Mr. Chaloner Chute on antiquarian pilgrimage :

"The roads grew bad beyond all badness, the night dark beyond all darkness, our guide frightened beyond all frightfulness. However, without being at all killed, we got up, or down—I forget which, it was so dark—a famous precipice called Silver Hill, and about ten at night arrived at a wretched village called Rotherbridge."

He forgot which ! That is—like the hill—rather steep. But he must have known by the time they returned, for he speaks of the view from the crest, on the homeward journey, as "the richest blue prospect you ever saw." It is indeed very beautiful, and the fact has been recognised by some enthusiastic person who, in a field beside the road to the left, has erected a tall staging, known as "The Beacon," for sightseers.

The hill is steep : not too steep for a determined cyclist to ride up it on the return, but still a very respectable gradient. It looks by no means so terrible as Walpole's description would prepare the stranger for ; but the roadway is, in fact, not that which gave these tourists and their guide

such qualms, for it was reconstructed about 1830. Occasional lengths of deserted hollow road at the side are surviving portions of the old road, and are quite steep and rugged enough to acquit Walpole of unnecessary alarm.

Robertsbridge is a long, long village of old-fashioned houses huddled together on either side of a narrow street in the flats that form the valley of the Rother. Although Robertsbridge is so undeniably old it is not an independent village, being in the parish of the much smaller Salehurst, seen across the levels, a mile away.

It has never been determined whether Robertsbridge acquired its name from Robert de Saint Martin, who founded the Cistercian Abbey "de Ponte Roberti" here in 1176, or from a corrupted version of "Rotherbridge." "Much," as Sir Roger de Coverley says in *The Spectator*, "might be said on both sides."

At any rate, it is unquestionably a place of bridges. There are seven in all, in a line along the road; but no one of them is at all considerable, and only three span any water, save in seasons of flood.

The beginning of the village, officially styled "Northbridge Street," is generally styled "the Bridges"; but was in turnpike days, when a gate existed here, "the Clapper."

The Abbey, long since demolished, lay one mile from the village, beside the Rother. Fragments of it are picturesquely built into the Abbey Farm, and serve as substantial walls for oast-houses.

The most perfect relic is the crypt, inside the house, forming an ideally cool dairy.

To this has come the Abbey that gave hospitality to Edward the First and his successor; whose Abbot in 1193, in company with the Abbot of Boxley, was of sufficient importance to be entrusted with the mission of discovering the whereabouts on the Continent of the imprisoned



THE ABBEY FARM.

Richard Cœur de Lion. All that is left of it, beside these fragments, is a manuscript volume in the Bodleian Library at Oxford, inscribed : "This book belongs to St. Mary of Robertsbridge : whosoever shall steal it or sell it, or in any way alienate it from this house, let him be Anathema Maranatha."

Notwithstanding this comprehensive curse, some one did steal it. A further inscription,

written, it is thought, by John Grandison, Bishop of Exeter, 1327–1369, declares : “ I, John, Bishop of Exeter, know not where the aforesaid house is ; nor did I steal this book, but acquired it in a lawful way.” It is quite surprising to find the old Churchmen believing in the efficacy of their curses, and thus seeking to turn them aside.

The site of the Abbey was granted by Henry the Eighth to Sir William Sidney, and there are those who like to think that his grandson, Sir Philip, would not have been killed at Zutphen, nor Algernon Sidney beheaded, had it not been for the curse upon sacrilege, sleeping in one generation to work woe in another.

For over one hundred and fifty years Robertsbridge Abbey was an iron and steel foundry, where cannon and shot were cast. In the garden of the farmstead a heap of cannon-balls, found about the premises, reminds the visitor of this closed chapter.

When Horace Walpole and his companion, descending Silver Hill in the dark, came to “ the wretched village called Rotherbridge,” they would have stayed the night, if they could have found any decent accommodation. “ But alas ! there was only one bed to be had. All the rest were inhabited by smugglers, whom the people of the house called ‘ mountebanks,’ and with one of whom the lady of the den told Mr. Chute he might lie.” That was rather too much for Mr. Chute, who was a very great person indeed when he was at home at his stately seat, “ The

Vyne," near Basingstoke, and he declined the fellowship.

So, with links and lanthorns, they continued their journey, and arrived at Battle, hardly six miles away, at two o'clock in the morning, to a "still worse" inn, "and that crammed with excise officers, one of whom had just shot a smuggler. However, as we were neutral powers, we have passed safely through both armies hitherto."

One would like to identify that "den." The term would scarcely apply to the "George," then, as now, the principal house, and a good specimen of the old English inn, whose proprietor, according to an advertisement in *The General Evening Post* of 1784, when the house was to let, had a "part-share" in the post-coach on the road to Hastings, described as a "favourite place for sea-bathing." Was it the "Seven Stars"? Or was it not the "Stag's Head" of other days, a shy-looking cottage lying low down on the right of the "George," and well remembered locally to have been the haunt of the smugglers of Darvell Wood?

Robertsbridge is pure Sussex, and pronounces local place-names in a manner peculiar to itself. In the result those names do not appear any the more poetic—Udiham becoming "Udjem," Bodiam "Bodjem," Northiam "Norjem," and Horsmonden "Ors'nd'n." The story is even told of a stranger asking an inhabitant of Heathfield the way to that place, and of that unlettered person for long declaring he had "niver 'eared of sech a name in

these parts." At last a light broke in upon him.
" You means Efful," he said.

Robertsbridge has now two railway-stations—that of the South Eastern, opened in 1851, and a newer, on the Kent and East Sussex Light Railway, recently made; but it is as old-fashioned as ever, and the subject-matter of the inns at night is apt to be of such recollections as that of how, seventy years ago, there were only three pairs of top-boots in the parish, and how farmers going up to London to cut an occasional dash would borrow them for the jaunt.

XXXVI

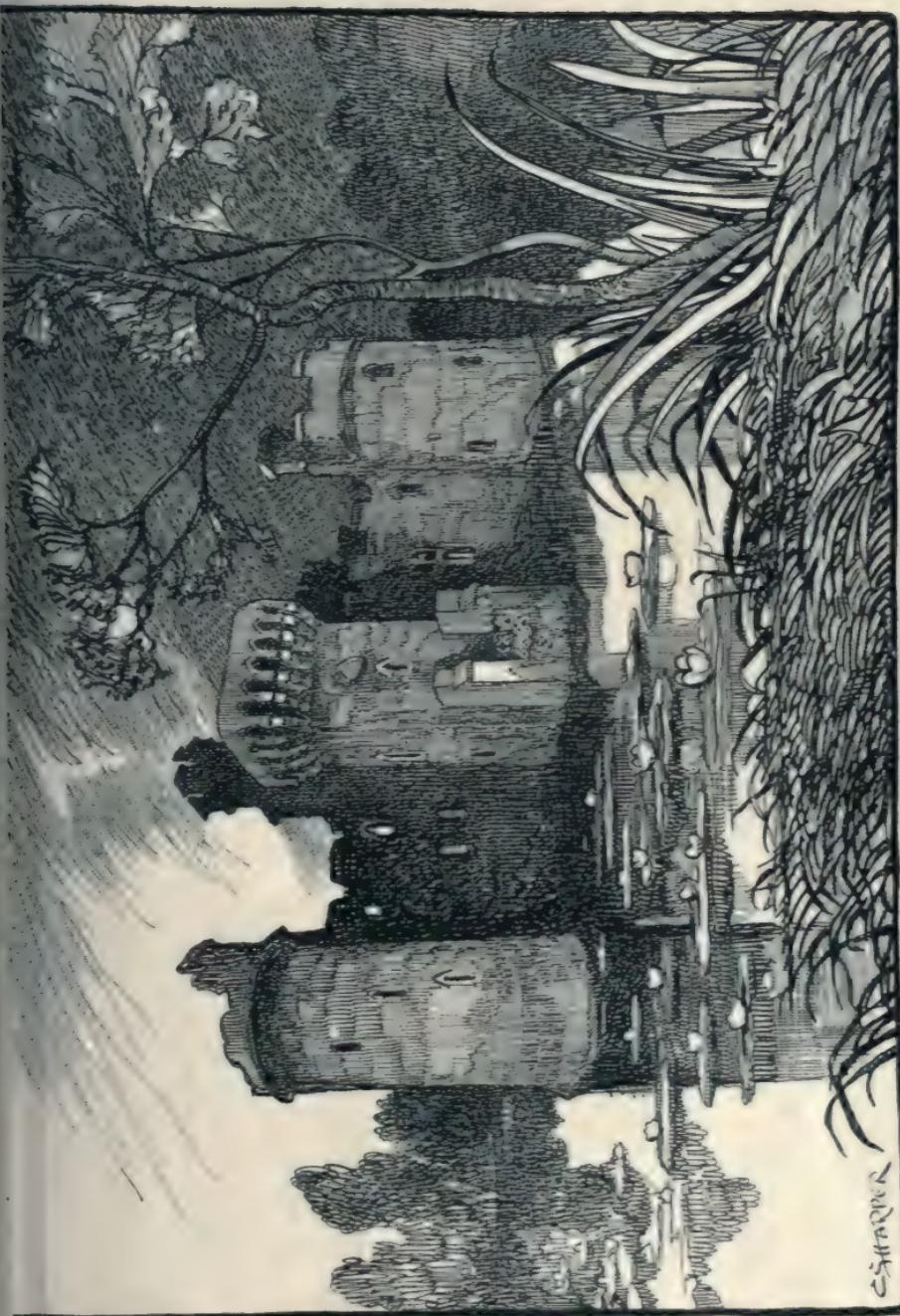
IT would be unthinkable to leave Robertsbridge without visiting its mother church of Salehurst; or, when there, to return without having seen Bodiam Castle, two miles onward.

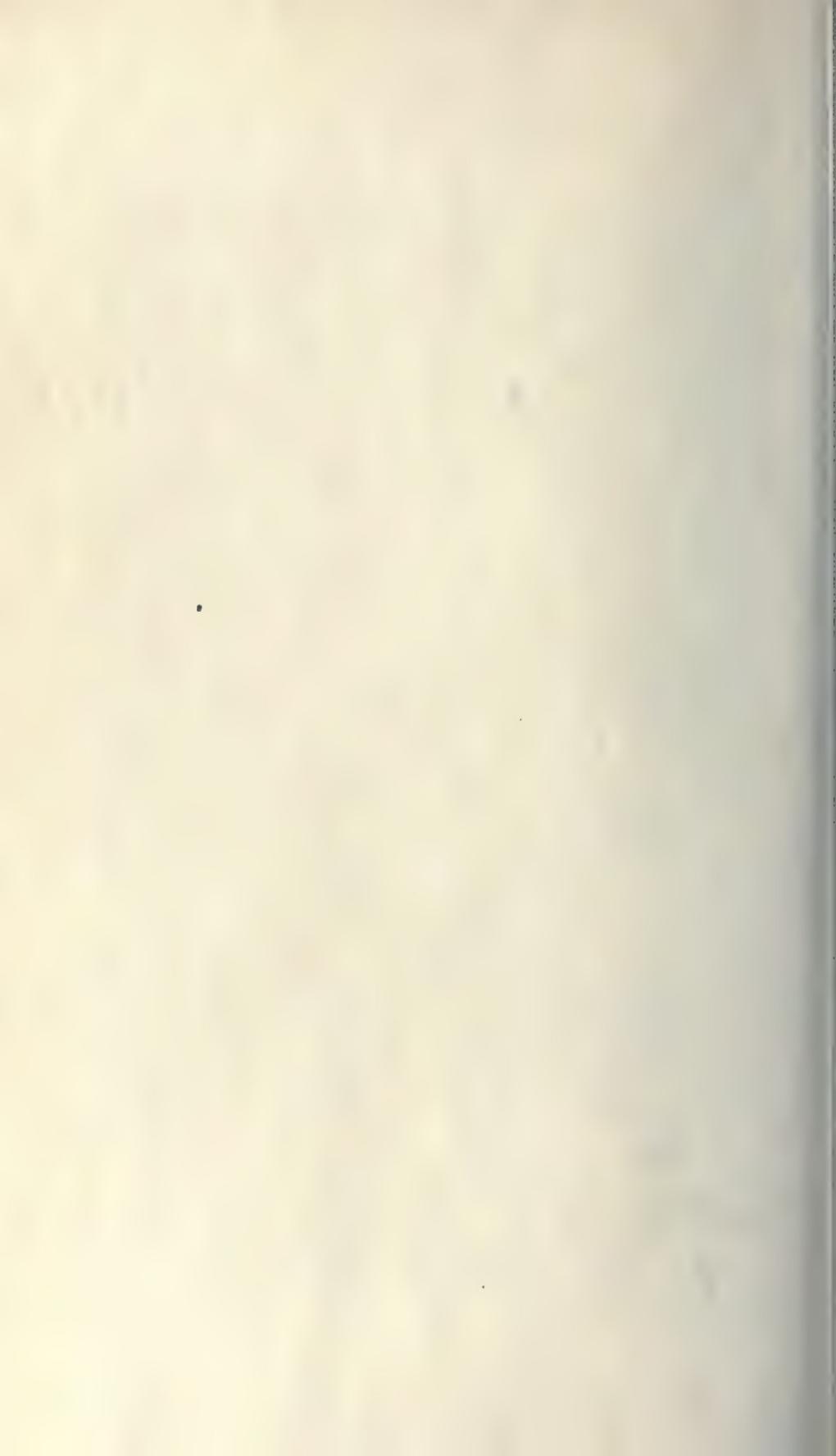
Salehurst Church stands picturesquely above the Rother, on the opposite bank from the Abbey. On the north side of it there stands an aged stone recording the incredible age of one "Peter Sparkes, who died October 8th, 1683, aged 126 years." He is referred to in the registers of Wadhurst as "being above 126 years old by his own computation." Within the church there are several seventeenth- and eighteenth-century cast-iron slabs to Peckhams and Stevens: relics of the forgotten iron-founding industry of the district.

The contemplative person, for whom antiquity

THE MOATED CASTLE OF BODIAM.

C. H. MARSH





is not everything, who finds interest in things of the present as well as those of the past, may discover some entertainment in noticing how exquisitely the accommodation in the House of God shades off in fine distinctions, from the cushioned seats and carpeted floors in front, to the strips of carpet and the fibre matting of the intermediate, and lastly to the bare seats and naked boards of those nearest the door—and the draughts. He notices how things religious and things secular are all ordered in these beautiful gradations : the three classes on railways, and the more than three orders of seats in theatres ; and he wonders—that contemplative person—whether the “many mansions” prepared in the Father’s house partake of the like subtleties.

The road to Bodiam—spelled “Bodiham” on old maps—is hilly and circuitous; but it brings you at last to that tiny village overlooking the Rother marshes, and to that castle which, more than any other ancient fortress in England, figures the fairy home of the Sleeping Beauty. Bodiam Castle stands on the hillside, beautifully rural, and is surrounded by a very broad and very clear moat of running water, fed from the never-failing springs that flow from the higher ground and are dammed at this point. The grey and lichenized walls of the castle rise sheer from the water, amid a wealth of the loveliest water-lilies.

It is mediævalism incarnated. The walls and the eight towers, alternately round and square, are almost perfect, and the wooden gate yet hangs

on its hinges across the bridge, where the portcullis grins and the holes in the masonry remain above, to show how, by flinging molten lead, boiling water, hot pitch, and domestic abominations upon the heads of the enemy, the garrison were prepared to hold their own.

But history tells us nothing of sieges or conflicts here. Possibly Sir Edward Dalyngrudge, warrior of Crecy and Poictiers, who in the fourteenth century built it, was too strong a castellan, and his moated fortalice more than a thought too formidable. At any rate, it is a castle without a story.

XXXVII

THE story is still told at Robertsbridge, and with appropriate awe, how a ploughman on Taylor's Farm, Mountfield, ploughed up £1,100 worth of gold, and sold it for five shillings, as old brass. That happened so long ago as 1862 and the tale has lost nothing, since then, in the re-telling. Mountfield was long a place of pilgrimage after that event, and the ploughmen on its fields drove the share deeper than ever they had done before; but if they made any more discoveries they were wise enough to keep the fact to themselves.

Although it all happened so long ago, almost the first thing the stranger hears of in Robertsbridge to this day is that mystic gold. Reduced to plain facts, it seems that during his work in

Barn Field, on Taylor's Farm, January 12th, 1862, a ploughman suddenly drove his plough into an entangled mass of metal that brought him up with a jerk. He threw the pieces on the baulk, and when his day's work was done showed them to his master, who thought they were brass, and gave them to him. They were really, from the description afterwards given of them, gold torques and other Early British ornaments, and had lain there two thousand years. The metal weighed no less than thirteen pounds.

After vainly endeavouring to sell the "old brass" to one dealer after another, a Hastings man more wideawake than the rest, suspecting it to be the more precious metal, gave the ploughman 6d. a pound for it—*liberal man!* He lost no time in travelling to London, where he sold it to a refiner, who melted it down and paid him £529 12s. 7d. for the resultant 153 oz. 12 gr. of fine gold. A piece had already been sold to a Hastings jeweller for £18.

Rumours of this extraordinary find soon spread, and in the end the ploughman and the sharp dealer were arraigned at the Winter Sessions at Lewes, December 1862, on the charge of illegally disposing of treasure-trove, the property of Her Majesty the Queen. They were each fined £265, half-value of the metal disposed of, or ordered to be imprisoned until the money was paid. Fairy gold has ever brought trouble upon those who find it.

It is useless to speculate upon the possible

antiquarian value of the ancient ornaments thus destroyed; but it must have been many times that of the mere metal.

The other main staples of talk are cattle, hops, and wool. If you cannot talk wool, hops, or cattle at Robertsbridge without some knowledge of those subjects, you are self-condemned. There is a fortnightly cattle-market; "ship" browse in many flocks on the surrounding pastures, but everywhere are the hop-gardens and their inseparable oast-houses.

XXXVIII

OUT of Robertsbridge and the Rother valley the road ascends steeply to John's Cross, where the old coach-road bears to the left in a circuitous route to Battle, by Vine Hall and Whatlington, three-quarters of a mile longer than the absolutely straight modern highway.

The "John's Cross" inn, the old toll-house, and a few cottages sum up the hamlet, and the rest of the way to Battle is of almost unbroken loneliness, except for the railway level-crossing, midway.

If, before we come into the town of Battle, we re-read the stirring story of the Norman invasion of 1066, and of the Battle of Senlac, known more generally to the world as the Battle of Hastings, fought on Saturday, October 14th, in that year, so fatal to English liberties, on the spot where Battle Abbey stands,—if, I say, before approaching

Battle, we read anew the story of that history-making day of carnage, we shall come into the quiet town with highly exalted feelings, and shall find it a place of many and deep significances to us.

With the tale of that historic struggle thus freshened in our memories, it is not merely the quiet little Sussex country town to which we now come, but to the commanding hill of Senlac, overlooking the seven miles of wooded lesser hills and vales by which the Norman host advanced from Hastings.

The Norman invasion of England, the catastrophe of Senlac, and the woes that then befell the English may all be traced to the weak character and foolish policy of Edward the Confessor, a king whose reputation for piety has, during all these intervening centuries, glazed over his lack of the first qualities of kingship. Firm rule, wise and far-seeing policy at home and abroad—those are the qualities, above all others, we look for in a king, and mere saintliness of character in a ruler has never yet, nor ever will, serve the turn of any nation. Edward the Confessor has, time beyond the memory of man, been held up as a pattern of all the virtues. We are told how he founded the Abbey of St. Peter, which we now call Westminster Abbey, on Thorney Isle; we listen, with what faith we may, to the story of how successfully he prayed away the nightingales who were disturbing his orisons at Havering-atte-Bower. We know that Rome, in the fulness of

time, canonised him ; but we know also that, however fitted he was in life for the cloister, however unaffected his piety, however mild and urbane his rule, certainly, from the patriotic view-point, his *métier* was not *d'être roi*, for he it was who brought over the Normans to his court, and by his favours to them showed them how desirable a country was this England.

Edward was, in short, a Normanised Englishman. The long years of exile he had passed oversea in Normandy, before he was called upon to rule over Saxon England, had set their seal upon him, and his favourite courtiers were of Norman-French nationality. He had, certainly, married Editha, daughter of the great Saxon Earl Godwin, and sister of Harold ; but his quarrels with her family go largely toward making up the story of his reign. The head and front of his offending is undoubtedly the alleged bequest, at a comparatively early period, of his crown to William, Duke of Normandy. Apart from the fact that the succession was not his to give, and would in any case have been the business of the Witan, this devising of crown and country to an alien whose ways were not those of the Saxons, and between whose people and Edward's people the keenest jealousy and animosity already existed, was unpatriotic to the last degree ; and had the "Confessor" been made to suffer the terrible fate that befell the second Edward, himself the patron of alien courtiers, that fate had been better deserved. Nay, were justice done the memory

of that traitor to his country, his shrine in Westminster Abbey would be torn down and demolished.

But clearer and wiser views at last prevailed with the cloistered King, and in that clarified and enlarged vision, he, drawing towards his end, designated the Saxon Harold, his brother-in-law, his successor. Wisdom, however, was vouchsafed him too late: the mischief was done. The fates were working in those years against England and for Duke William of Normandy, whom history knows, *ad nauseam*, as "William the Conqueror." That historic personage was a great captain, strong in battle and in strategy, but he had also the mind of an attorney, which could quirk you and quibble you, and chouse you as efficiently as the sharpest practitioner that ever misused the law. It was no matter to that acute and ambitious brain that the sanctimonious "Confessor" had revoked his bequest in favour of Harold; to him, at least, it held good. And events marvellously aided him. Somewhere about 1064, Earl Harold, already king-designate, was voyaging down channel, when his ships were driven ashore on the coast of Ponthieu, in territory tributary to William. Those were times when to be cast ashore was to suffer, not only the discomforts incidental to shipwreck, but to be seized and held to ransom by the scarce more than robber-lords of that age. Such an one was Count Guy of Ponthieu, who speedily seized Harold and imprisoned him in his castle of Beaurain, and would have held him

there, over against the arrival of that ransom, had it not been for the Duke, who, hearing of this odd freak of fate, and with a keen eye to how the incident could be used to his own advantage, demanded his release. But Harold's enlargement from an acknowledged and undisguised prison was merely an exchange for a gilded captivity. Nominally, he was now become the guest of the Duke, in his palace at Rouen, but in reality he was his prisoner, only to be released on terms. Those terms were soon disclosed, and the English Earl, already marked as the successor of Edward, was made to swear, at Bayeux, as the price of his liberty, to become the guardian of William's supposed interests in England, and to receive him, on Edward's death, as King. These oaths he took, with others, upon a chest which William had secretly filled with the choicest saintly relics that Normandy contained. It does not become us, with our later knowledge of the very unsaintly character of the old bones usually palmed off in those times as the relics of saints, to scoff at Harold turning pale when the tremendous character of the contents of that chest was revealed to him. The credulity of that age did not permit him the assumption that the alleged relics were probably no more than the mere ordinary unsanctified plebeian bones and teeth and fragments of skin we may readily presume them to have been, with the same relation to the genuine articles as that of a Bank of Engraving note to one issued by the Bank of England. Harold accepted them, as he

could not choose but do, at their face value, so to speak, and trembled.

Such is the story handed down to us. The oath taken, Harold was free to return; and, as his own conscience later told him, and as ours must needs tell us, was free to disregard an oath, however solemn, taken under circumstances of compulsion.

In two years from that time, January 5th, 1066, the Confessor died, with his latest breath naming Harold his successor—a choice later ratified by the council of the English realm. Harold was elected and proclaimed King, and the warrior-lawyer over in Normandy was left out in the cold. William, however, could not have been surprised at this, and set to work upon the next step in his scheme, which was to obtain the support of the Pope against “the perjurer,” as he was pleased to style Harold. All these things had been thought out long in advance by that wily brain. William, as claimant to the English throne, could be effectively aided by William as champion of the Church’s might; and William had ever been concerned, from motives of policy, to figure as one of the Church’s most devout sons. If you consider it, religion has ever, from the earliest times, been made the stalking-horse of scoundrels: a fact so patent that your playwright or your novelist is commonly concerned to furnish forth his villain with a text or a psalm, and thus moral sentiments on the stage are the stigmata of the wrong-doer.

XXXIX

THE Pope, Alexander the Second, placing his ghostly terrors at the disposal of William, declared Harold an usurper, and William the lawful heir. Thus early had Englishmen to remember Rome for a disservice. It then remained only for William to collect his forces for an invasion of England. He set about the work with business-like promptitude and a settled determination which, by comparison, make the great Napoleon's projected invasion of over seven hundred years later seem like the wayward fancy of an infant. The forests of Normandy were felled and converted into timber, and all the summer of 1066 thousands of shipwrights were busily employed in Norman havens building the vast fleet designed to invade our shores. When we form a mind's-eye picture of a fleet, we necessarily visualise nowadays something very different from the flotilla prepared by the Duke of Normandy for the invasion of England; but we must go far back, beyond even the small ships with which Edward the First waged war in foreign parts, if we would see what William's navy, made of the green timber that had been growing six months before, was like. His "ships" numbered, according to the lowest computation, six hundred and ninety-six: according to the highest, there were over three thousand; but if we turn to the indisputable evidence of the famous Bayeux Tapestry it will be seen that they were craft more in the nature of galleys—open boats with one mast.

The same want of exact figures meets the inquirer who seeks to learn the number of that invading army. Contemporary chroniclers are at great variance, the numbers, by their accounts, ranging from 14,000 up to 60,000. From February onwards to September those craft were building and that army collecting. Meanwhile King Harold was not idle. He had long been skilled in warfare, and was as able a general as William himself, and by sea and land he was gathering a force together that in all human probability would have annihilated the Norman host had it not been for the happening that at this juncture divided his attention.

That happening was the invasion of northern England by the Norwegian king, Harald Hardrada, in conjunction with Harold's own brother, the banished rebel Tostig, in September, at the very time when the Duke of Normandy's expedition was lying ready to sail, only waiting upon a southern wind. The Norwegian host landed in the Ouse and the Humber, and the English had been defeated at Fulford and Hardrada received in York as a conqueror before the English Harold could march from London to the scene. But when he arrived victory attended him, and in the Battle of Stamford Bridge, September 25th, he not only defeated the invaders, and killed Hardrada and his brother, Tostig, but almost annihilated the foreigners. It was the supreme victory of a great military career, and the last ever gained by the Saxon English. In the midst of the

rejoicings and the absolutely necessary rest at York, Harold received the tidings of the Norman landing at Pevensey, near Hastings.

Fate had indeed dealt hardly with that brave heart. He had marched full two hundred miles to meet one foe, and he was now to march back to face another, already established on the coast he had been so concerned to guard. For the south wind that had been denied William for near a month of waiting at the Dive and at St. Valery had, in this hour of his need, played Harold false and had wafted the Norman sails across the Channel. William landed unopposed on the deserted coast at Pevensey, twelve miles to the west of Hastings, in the early morning of September 28th, and the next day marched to Hastings, which he made the base of his operations. From that place he ravaged and laid waste all the surrounding country, with the intention of drawing Harold down to the sea-coast, to attack him in defence of his plundered and ill-treated subjects. He reasoned, as an invader even in these times must needs reason, that the chances were more in his favour if he could meet the English by the shore. Were he obliged to march inland to the attack, grave considerations of provisioning his army must be contended with, and in the event of defeat his difficulties would have increased with every mile he had advanced into the interior. He thus lay at Hastings, within reach of his ships, while Harold was marching southwards, and organising his army in London. There were not wanting

those who at this time warned William earnestly against what they considered the folly of his enterprise. The might of the Saxons was no mere tale, and messengers, coming southward with news of how Harold had defeated the Norwegian invaders, and was now marching to repeat his victory upon the Norman host, might well have made even so tried and fearless a soldier as William retrace his steps. But he had come to victory or to death, and had staked all upon this one throw for that magnificent prize, the crown of England. Had he recrossed the Channel, it is certain that never again would the opportunity of landing on an unguarded coast be afforded him; and on all counts, now or never was his time. He had taken a high moral ground for his invasion, and was come, by his own claim, not as Conqueror, but as one claiming his legal rights, secured on the most sacred of oaths and hallowed by the blessing of the Church. Legal rights are the great standby of the plunderer and the spoiler, and the stirrup for William's vaulting ambition was legality. It was, as we have seen, the kind of legality we associate rather with the pettifogging attorney than with justice; but he had wrung the blessing of Rome on it, and beside his banner floated the standard consecrated by the Pope.

XL

WILLIAM "the Conqueror," as history styles him, never so styled himself. His astute mind thrust such a warlike thing into the background. He had only come to claim his own, and was unfortunately

obliged to fight for it against the perjurer! One can almost in imagination hear the pietistic snuffle of a Pecksniff in this mixture of legal and religious motives.

It was about October 5th that Harold reached London. He lay there six days, awaiting the promised reinforcements from his northern Earls, which never came, and in the meanwhile calling in his levies from the



WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR.
Bayeux Tapestry.

near counties. But before he set out for Sussex he paid a last visit to his abbey of Waltham, which he had dedicated to the Holy Cross and had enriched with many gifts—evidences of his piety. For we must by no means believe that William, the self-constituted champion of sacred relics and the Church, alone practised, or professed, religion. Harold's piety was at least as marked, and it is perhaps not altogether the

Englishman's sympathy for an Englishman, or his chivalrous regret for the vanquished, which sees in the ill-fated King's abasement before the Holy Rood of Waltham on the eve of that fatal struggle a more sincere approach to the Most High. He lay prostrate upon the pavement in supplication, and the dark, wonder-loving legends of that time tell us that, as he did so, the hitherto raised head of the sacred image bowed itself upon the Cross, as though enacting again the tragedy of Calvary: in token, as the belief of that age ran, that the career of Harold was finished.

The English army set forth from London on Thursday, October 12th, and marched inevitably, it being the most direct route, by the line of country through which runs the Hastings Road of our own day. So speedily did the troops set out to meet their foe, that by Friday night Harold had pitched his camp on this hill of Senlac, eight miles from Hastings, on the site of this town of Battle.

A very ancient oak, known as the "Watch Oak," stands in the private garden of a house on the bye-road to the right entering Battle. It is traditionally the spot whence Harold's scouts watched for the approach of the invaders.

No one is skilled to tell us whence came this name of Senlac, nor what it meant. It was the "hill called Senlac." Around it on three sides were hollows, marshy with the feeders of little streams. The Normans gave the name a French twist and called it "Sanglac" or Sanguelac," the Lake of Blood; but although their perversion of

the name is ingenious, it will not serve our turn, since we see that the name of Senlac existed prior to the battle. Nor will yet another Gallicised version—that of Saintlache, or Holy Lake, do; and the meaning of the old name belonging to this place of battle must of necessity be left in obscurity.

Harold chose his own battle-ground, and chose it with the trained, unerring eye of one who had been the victor in many hard-fought campaigns. Electing to take up a defensive position in a spot where the menace of his presence must needs make William fight, or remain disastrously inactive on the coast, he ranged his army on the summit of this long spur of hill that then thrust out boldly from the wooded surroundings and commanded a view over gorse-covered folds of down, away to the sea. He had every reason for this plan of awaiting attack, chief among them the totally different characteristics of the two armies : the Norman army being strong in cavalry, the Saxons fighting wholly on foot, from King Harold and his two brothers, Gurth and Leofwin, down to the merest churl ; while on the Norman side there was a strong force of archers, and on the Saxon none whatever. The Saxons, or the English, as we perhaps should more properly name them, were armed with javelins and with the two-handed battle-axe. The battle-axe, carried over the shoulder and wielded from it with a two-handed grasp and a swing of the whole body, was a terrible weapon in the hands of a body of men acting purely on the

defensive, but it was ill-adapted for pursuit. A blow from it was easily capable of cleaving, not only through the helmet and head of a horseman, but of felling both him and his horse. Such was the weapon upon which the English chiefly relied in standing their ground and to withstand the onset of the Norman horse, which, owing to Harold's strategy in seizing this commanding eminence, would be under the necessity of charging uphill.

To render the position additionally secure, opportunity was taken, ere night fell, to fortify the edge of the plateau with a palisade cut from the surrounding woodlands, and to wattle it with twigs and boughs so closely interwoven that it was impossible for a single person to creep through. Here, then, the English army lay athwart where now runs the road to the sea, but where at that time, beside a landmark named in the old English Chronicle "the hoar apple-tree," there was apparently no other salient object save the rough track which must even then have existed, leading down to the port of Hastings.

The night before the battle seems to us, and must even have seemed to the opposing armies, a tremendously fateful interlude. Political and other considerations were such that all must have known the fate of England to depend, not upon a long campaign and a series of marches and fights, but solely upon the issue of the great contest now impending. How, then, did they pass the eve of battle? The Normans are our chief, and almost sole, authorities here, and were concerned, as inevi-

tably they would be, to picture the Norman army as a host of Christian soldiers going forth to war with a dissolute, drink-sodden rabble. According to this partisan view, the Battle of Senlac, or Hastings, was lost by the English chiefly owing to the effects upon them of an all-night orgie of wassailing. When morning came, and with it the great struggle that was to decide the fate of England, the English host were still muzzy with their potations of the night before, and had not the clear vision and cool judgment that are as necessary on the battlefield as elsewhere. What a fine theme for a Temperance Lecturer, hot on the subject of "the cursed drink"! Such an one might fitly show by this instance how indulgence in it destroys not only the individual but the nation itself; but no one seems ever to have fastened upon this very eloquent illustration.

The Saxons certainly were mighty topers, and it is by no means too much to say that they were a nation of drunkards. Ancient chroniclers at all points fully support this sweeping statement; amongst them William of Malmesbury, who tells us that the Anglo-Saxon rule was bad, and the monks and nobility corrupt. "Drinking in parties," he says, "was an universal practice, in which occupation they passed entire nights, as well as days."

Coming to a description of the night before the battle, he tells us, in the original Latin in which he wrote: "Angli, ut accepimus, totam noctem insomnem cantibus potibusque ducentes." That

is to say, in plain English, they kept awake all night, singing, and drinking innumerable drinks—which is a very fine, fearless way of preparing to meet the foe, and one highly expressive of contempt for him; but it is not a wise way.

He then proceeds to expand his argument by saying: “The vices attendant on drunkenness which enervate the human mind followed; hence it arose that, engaging William more with rashness and precipitate fury than military skill, they doomed themselves and their country to slavery by one, and that an easy, victory.”

XLI

THE Normans spent the night after a very different fashion—in prayer and in the confession of their sins—for they knew that many must fall on that eventful day. The Bishops of Coutances and Bayeux received their confessions, and recorded their vows on this Friday night that if they were spared on the morrow they would fast on Saturdays for the remainder of their lives. William, for his part, registered a solemn vow that if he gained the victory he would found a great church on the battlefield, in gratitude for the divine aid. The Normans, in short, made all due preparation; and as they prayed well, so did they fight, on that fatal morrow.

Another, and a highly picturesque, chronicler tells us delightfully of the alleged actual Saxon

debauch on the battlefield, on the night before the fray. This account is by Wace, the author of several romances and narrative-poems in Norman-French. Wace wrote his jingling metrical narrative about 1170, more than a hundred years after the battle was fought, but probably incorporated the floating traditions of that great occasion, doubtless still plentiful in his time.

Here is his picture of the Saxon orgies :

Quant la bataille dut joster,
 La nuit avant, ço oï conter,
 Furent Englez forment haitiez,
 Mult riant è mult enveisiez ;
 Tote nuit mangierent è burent
 Unkes la nuit et lit ne jurent.
 Mult les véissiez demener,
 Treper, è saillir è chanter.

The Norman-French in which Wace writes is somewhat puzzling, but the general sense of it is that “the night before the battle was fought, as I am told, the English were joyous, laughing much and skylarking. They ate and drank all night, refusing to take any repose, and skipped about, dancing and singing.”

Then he gives us the English shouts, as heard by the Normans :

Bublie erient è *weissel*,
E laticome è *drincheheil*,
Drinc Hindrewart è *Drintome*,
Drinc Helf è *drinc Tome*.

or, as we may put it, “Bubble it up!” they cried, and “Wassail!” and “Let it come,” and “Drink

hail!" "Drink hinderwards and drink to me, drink health and drink to me!" Modernised, and applied to beer, which is to our times what mead or metheglin was to the Saxons, "Bubble it up!" would appear to mean "Froth it up," or "Put a good head on it"; while "Let it come" and "Drink hail!" are simply "Pass the bottle" and "Here's your health!" But how you drink "hinderwards," unless it means "Pass the bottle back again," I cannot conceive.

At any rate, it is quite evident, by this account, that these English warriors had each a thoroughly good skinful of booze overnight. They seem to have almost swallowed in it, and were precisely the men who would have appreciated the bibulous spirit of that drinking ballad of modern times, which ran something after this style:

Beer, beer, glorious beer;
Fill yourself right up to 'ere.
Up with the sale of it,
Down with a pail of it,
Glorious, glorious beer.
Up with the trade of it,
Drink till you're made of it,

and so forth, in a style eminently calculated to win the hearts of my lords Ardilaun, Iveagh, Hindlip, and Burton.

But the Saxon mead, which may still be discovered in remote parts of the country as the home-brewed "metheglin," a sweet and sickly liquor made from honey, is a heady drink, a great deal more likely to result in a splitting

headache the next morning than the clearer brew of the barley ; and the Norman libellers would have us believe that, because of that matutinal headache, and an enlarged vision which led the English to see two, or three, Normans for every one—and to strike at the ones that were not there—they lost the Battle of Hastings.

The historical facts do not quite fit in with that view. Doubtless the English and the Norman methods of passing the battle-eve were different. For one thing, the Norman wolf was posing, until he almost deceived himself, as the injured party, and one fighting the battle of religion as well as of personal wrongs ; and he acted fully up to those parts. The English, on the other hand, were elated with their recent victory in the north, and felt a not unnatural confidence in their ability to repeat it. Therefore, they went into battle with less solemnity than the Normans. But we nowhere read that the English battle-axes were swung with the less terrible effect because of the revels which may or may not have passed overnight in the English camp, and nothing seems more certain than that victory only fell to the Normans because of the mistaken warlike ardour of a portion of the English army, which broke its ranks in order to pursue a panic-stricken section of the Norman array, and thus afforded William's cavalry a footing on that bitterly contested hill of Senlac.

XLII

THE battle began about nine o'clock in the morning, the Norman army marching from Hastings by the spot where Crowhurst Park is now seen, to Telham Hill, the "Hetheland" of the chroniclers. Here the Norman knights put on their armour, and here William made his vow that if victory were given him he would build a great abbey on the spot where he saw the emblazoned English banner of the Fighting Man flung proudly upon the morning breeze. His army then advanced to the attack, the archers on foot in the front rank, the swordsmen behind them, and in the rear the cavalry. William himself was armed with an iron mace, the weapon also carried by his brother, Odo, Bishop of Bayeux.

The fight began with a discharge of arrows from the Norman ranks, followed by the singular interlude provided by Taillefer, the Norman jongleur, or minstrel, who rode forth from the ranks singing songs of chivalry, and of the knightly doings of Roland and Charlemagne. He had begged from William the privilege of striking the first blow, but as he went out into the space between the confronting armies he assumed first his character of a juggler, throwing his sword into the air, and then catching it, to the astonishment of the English, who doubtless wondered what manner of warrior was this. But, ceasing his tricks, he suddenly rushed upon the English ranks,

and piercing one Englishman with his lance and striking down another with his sword, was there-upon himself slain. It was the bravest, or, if you will, the most foolhardy, act of the battle, for he went forth to certain death. But his action did this much: it heated the blood of both sides, and those who might have fought at the beginning without the full fury of enthusiasm, now fell to it in frenzy, fired by his example. It heartened William's second line, the infantry, to their heavy task of advancing, under the showers of English stones and javelins, up the hill to the attempted destruction of the palisade; but although they strove, the effort was too great. All who approached within the reach of English arms and English axes were struck down, almost cleaved asunder, and although the rear ranks filled the air with *Dieu aide!* they wavered from that first onset, the English shouting "Out, out!" as they thrust back every one from their defences, varying that cry with the pious invocations, "Holy Rood," "Holy Cross," and "God Almighty!"

Wace tells us of those battle-cries in his quaint renderings of the English the Normans heard:

*Olicrosse sovent crioent,
E Godemite reclamoent ;
Olicrosse est en engliez
Ke Sainte Croix est en franceiz,
Et Godemite altretant
Com en franceiz Dex tot poissant.*

Or, translated :

Holy Cross they often cried,
And shouted God Almighty;

Holy Cross is in English
What *Sainte Croix* is in French,
And God Almighty is, otherwise,
As they say in French, *Dieu tout puissant*.

If the English really did say “’Oly Cross,” it shows us that the letter “h” was as slighted in the eleventh century as it is in the twentieth.

The Norman infantry had now recoiled, and the turn of the cavalry was come. The choicest chivalry of Normandy, however, strove in vain uphill against the English defences, and many a horse and his mail-clad rider fell beneath the axes. Harold’s choice of a battle-ground and his defensive tactics were fully justified, and the Battle of Senlac would have been his but for the fatal impetuosity of a portion of his less disciplined troops, who, seeing the panic and headlong flight of the Norman army, broke their ranks in pursuit. The temptation was great, for everywhere the Normans were in flight, and the awful cry had been raised among them that William himself was dead. It was only by removing his helmet and disclosing his face that his men were assured of his existence. “Madmen!” he cried. “Why flee ye? Death is behind, victory before you. I live, and by God’s grace I will conquer,” and so saying he forced those immediately around him back into the fray.

This incident has been carefully pictured in the Bayeux Tapestry, where we see “the Duke comforting his young soldiers” by disclosing his face, while his standard-bearer draws attention to

him. The impressiveness of the scene is perhaps a little marred by the grotesque drawing, and by the extraordinary likeness of "the Duke" to Mr. Arthur Roberts, and of one of the "young soldiers" to accepted caricatures of Mr. Austen Chamberlain.

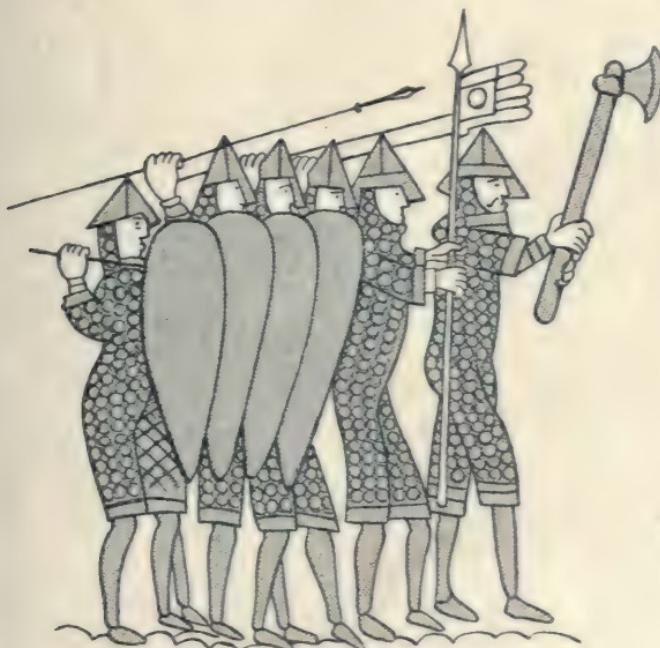
Meanwhile the flying Norman infantry had in other parts of the field turned upon their pursuers, and here the sword proved the better weapon, for the rash English were cut to pieces. Then, somewhere about three o'clock in the afternoon, began the most terrible attack of that dreadful day, in the desperate charge made by William, his brothers Odo and Robert, and their attendant knights, against the sturdy group around Harold and the English standard. William, on horseback, sought out the English King, and might have met him face to face, had not the King's brother, Gurth, flung a spear at him, which, although it missed the greater mark, brought down his horse. Unlucky, ill-aimed blow! It brought Gurth and William face to face, afoot, and presently the English Earl was lying dead from a blow of the Duke's mace. Near by, and almost at the same time, fell Harold's other brother, Leofwin. The English fortunes were indeed running low, but the battle was not yet decided. Still that devoted phalanx of axemen hewed down most of those who approached, and the day was neither lost nor won. It was then that the ill-judged pursuit made by the English a little earlier bore bitter fruit—the sorrow of it! William had noted its



"DUKE WILLIAM COMFORTS HIS YOUNG SOLDIERS."

Central incident of the Battle of Hastings. From the Bayeux Tapestry.

effect, and now that his direct attacks were like to fail, he had recourse to the wily trick of a feigned flight. Accordingly, to his instructions, a wing of his army turned tail and fled, as though in panic ; and immediately, learning nothing from that earlier disaster, a portion of the English came down after them. It was the turning-point



LAST STAND OF THE ENGLISH.

Bayeux Tapestry.

of the day, for the ground the English had left was just the one end of the hill where the rise was appreciably less steep, and more easily to be charged up by the Norman cavalry. The fight down in the valley between the pretended fugitives and their pursuers meanwhile went forward with varying fortunes. The flying Frenchmen turned,

as before, but this time the English seized on an outlying hill, and although they fell, they fell in company with their foes. In their turn, they inveigled the French horsemen into charging upon them into an unsuspected ravine, where they fell in a mass and were despatched to the last man, so that the old chroniclers tell us, and the Bayeux Tapestry shows, how the hollow was filled with the dead.

William and the pick of his army now beset the hill from its western slope, thus left open by the descent of the pursuing English, and here, and along the ridge to the very spot where Harold stood, wielding his axe with the best of them beneath his standard, the fight stubbornly continued. The autumn day was now fast drawing to its close, and the battle might have been still undecided that night, had it not been for an inspiration that seized William. His archers had hitherto not made any great impression. He now ordered them to shoot their arrows into the air, so that they might descend with terrific force upon the heads of the English ; and this done, the execution was dreadful. Many were struck in the eye by the falling shafts, among them Harold, the English King himself. An arrow pierced his right eye, and as he agonisedly strove to withdraw it, the shaft broke. Let us not enlarge upon this dreadful end of the patriot King, who was presently discovered and slain by the Norman knights as he lay upon the ground at the foot of his royal banner.

Thus fell Harold, in his prime, for he was but forty-four years of age. It happened long, long ago ; but although much else has turned to dry-as-dust in that vast interval, and although many historical figures and the deeds they wrought are mere vacuities, emptinesses, and parchment-like bogles, the heroic death of Harold in defence of his country still calls up bitter sorrow in those



FLIGHT OF THE ENGLISH CHURLS.

Bayeux Tapestry.

of us to whom history is not merely the printed page, or a glass-covered case in a museum.

When Harold fell England fell with him. All who fought with him that day knew it must be so, yet the fight, although it was by now a hopeless cause, went on until the evening deepened into night ; and although those of meaner estate may have fled when the fortunes of the day were obviously lost, those of higher sort plied their axes to the death. Few of them escaped, or sought

to do so. Yet, even as the last streaks of waning day faded into night the defeated and fleeing English turned once more upon their foes, and in the marshy hollow in the rear of the battle-ground, then eloquently called "Malfosse," slew in great numbers the Norman horsemen who incautiously pursued them. It was the last expiring effort of the day, but so sturdy an one that the Normans were for awhile stricken again with a temporary panic, thinking that English reinforcements had arrived. But no fresh troops were come to save that situation ; and not even at this last moment had the northern Earls, Edwin and Morcar, sent aid to redeem their characters. They live in history in company with Judas and many another perjured traitor. By their treachery England was lost.

XLIII

THE battle was over, after more than nine hours' continued fighting ; and now William's tent was pitched upon the spot where the English standard had been planted. There he supped, and there, amid the thousands of dead and dying, he slept. On the morrow the mutilated body of Harold was found ; but neither the bribes nor the entreaties of his aged mother, Gytha, who had now lost all her sons in battle, could induce William to yield it to her or any other. The perjurer, the excommunicate, he swore, should not have religious sepulture.

Harold's body should rest in unhallowed ground, beneath a cairn of stones on the rocks of Hastings, and should thus in death guard the Saxon shore he had guarded in life. And so to the shore at Hastings, wrapped in a purple robe, his body was borne. And truly, no other burial could be so fitting for the hero whose life was given for his trust. The Duke of Normandy was no sentimentalist, and to the minds of that age unconsecrated interment was a thing to be thought of only with a shudder; but he was chivalrously poetic here, without a suspicion of it himself, for no hero was ever laid in more fitting place than Harold, by the salt selvedge of the coast he had sworn to protect, and did protect to his last moment: and as for consecration—why, there be those who dare to think that the laying there of this man's body, who shed his life-blood for the land that gave him birth, was itself hallowing and consecration transcendent for that rocky marge.

But the epic fitness of Harold's resting-place was not perceived by that age, or was thought a thing of lesser moment than that he should be accorded religious burial; and thus it happened that, when the fury of the Conqueror's first rage had died down, permission was accorded for Harold's body to be translated to Waltham Abbey, the great minster himself had founded in Essex. The last days of the terrible year of 1066 were drawing in when that re-interment took place, and Sussex lost the bones of her patriot.

This is pre-eminently the era of national

memorials, when heroes of to-day and of yesterday and other personages whom we are not all agreed to call heroes are honoured in effigies of bronze. 'Tis but yester-year since Alfred the Great was duly, and properly, commemorated in this shape, in his city of Winchester, and a statue of William of Orange—our William the Third—was erected, not so long since, on the spot where he landed, at Brixham, in Tor Bay ; but Harold yet awaits his turn. For the why of it, I know not ; unless indeed it be that we English are ever a thought too practical, and honour, not so much endeavour, as success. Alfred was successful ; Harold in the end was crushed, and his England broken. Yet it was not himself was lacking ; it was his rash irregulars, who, by their headlong zeal, lost him the day. He strove his utmost, and that utmost was, beyond rivalry, noble.

To say, “He did his best,” is the noblest epitaph we can give any man, and none should grudge Harold posthumous honour. We “Englishmen,” as we may still call ourselves, are not yet so indisputably the masters of the world that we can afford to disregard our national heroes, and Harold’s statue, of appropriate heroic size, surely should stand prominently over Hastings, to show newer generations how we can honour even endeavour that has won to no position, and that we can remember even our defeated heroes.

The Conqueror, as we must call him, despite his studied avoidance of that title, inimical to his “legal” claim, fully redeemed his vow to build a

great abbey upon the field of battle. He built the Abbey, which he dedicated to St. Martin of the Place of Battle, on the place where so many had been slain to satisfy his ambition, rearing the High Altar, the holiest spot, on the exact position where Harold had fallen. William Faber, that *Fabricius*, or smith, turned monk, who was present at the great battle, and had been at the Duke's side when he vowed the Abbey here, would, when it came to the actual building of it, have chosen another site; for here, he urged, on the hill-top, water was lacking. Let him and his brethren from the Abbey of Marmoutiers build in the valley, where the springs were never dry. But this suggestion outraged the Conqueror's sense of the dramatic fitness of things, which, as we have already seen in his selection of Harold's seashore resting-place, was a very keen sense indeed. No: he would build upon the actual field of battle, or not at all; and if the Almighty spared his life, wine should be more plentiful in that Abbey than water elsewhere.

Battle Abbey very soon began to rise on that field of blood. The King of England, as he was now become, spent money freely on it from his treasury; ship-loads of the fine building-stone of Caen came continually across Channel from Normandy, until, by one of those miraculous dreams dreamt at need in those times, a bed of stone was discovered, and a quarry opened, in the neighbourhood. The rising Abbey was richly endowed with manors far and near, and was made

the centre of a three miles' circuit exempted from all other jurisdictions, ecclesiastical or civil. Its abbots, moreover, were mitred and seated in the councils of the realm, and beside holding the privilege of sanctuary, theirs were the rights of free warren, inquest, and treasure-trove. Were they merciful men and pitiful, then those dispositions could be humoured to the full, for they were given the prerogative of pardoning any criminal they met on his way to execution : a prerogative that meant much in those days, when execution was done upon criminals for a large variety of offences.

More interesting than all others among William's gifts to the Abbey were his sword and his coronation robes, which, stripped of their gold and silver chains and amulets in the reign of Rufus, for centuries remained objects of the greatest curiosity. But the Abbey was long a-building, and twenty-eight years had flown since the battle and William himself had been seven years in his grave, before it was completed and finally consecrated.

XLIV

AND then it stood in this noble situation for well over four hundred and fifty years, growing in architectural splendour and worldly wealth, but decaying in religious life and morals, in common with all other monasteries. Its income was equal to £10,000 per annum of our money : the Abbot

entertained guests of the noblest, and the brethren's indiscriminate charity made Battle a centre for all the "mighty beggaris, sturdye vagrantes, idle mychers, and foule cozeners" in Sussex. It was rotten-ripe and full fit to be plucked when Henry the Eighth ended the monasteries and when his Commissioners appeared before its doors on May 27th, 1538.

To sentimentalise over the suppression of places like Battle Abbey would be excusable in the ignorant; in those fully informed it would be criminal. It cannot be too often repeated that the work undertaken by Henry the Eighth was no mere capricious act of tyranny, was no unwarrantable or unprovoked attack upon the religious houses. Wyclif had long before, at the close of the fourteenth century, declared that the rotting trunk of the monastic establishments cumbered the ground. In 1414 over one hundred alien priories were suppressed. In 1489 Pope Innocent the Eighth issued to the Archbishop of Canterbury a commission for a general investigation. Parliament itself had petitioned Henry the Fourth for seizure of the possessions they administered so ill. Wolsey had from within the Church seen the decadence of the Abbeys and Priories, and himself suppressed a number of the smaller houses and devoted their property to the better use of education.

It is a cloud of witness to the general and cumulative disgust of the times with the enclosed life.

The Commissioners came to Battle, dressed fantastically in the plunder of other religious houses they had ransacked on their way, "decked in the spoils of the desecrated chapels, with copes for doublets, tunics for saddle-cloths, and the silver relic-cases hammered into sheaths for their daggers." They, in short, committed on their side almost as many excesses as the foul-living, blasphemous monastic brethren had on theirs; but they had this excuse: that if they indeed made a mockery of religion, it was the monks themselves first showed them the way of it.

The report of Dr. Layton, Chief Commissioner, described the conduct of Battle as "the worst that ever I see in all other places, whereat I see specially the blake sort of dyvellyshe monks." Their doings, however, had not been so bad as those of establishments subsequently visited, whose sins will scarce bear mention.

But the monks of Battle had always been prepared to go considerable lengths for money. In the monastery was hung the famous "Roll of Battle Abbey," purporting to be the roll-call of the Norman knights on the morning of the Battle of Hastings, to which they answered "Here," or "Ici," or "Adsum," as might be. This historical parchment is reported to have been removed to Cowdray, where it perished in the fire of 1793, but it had, centuries before, been so tampered with by the monks that all its value had been destroyed. It early became a foible among noble or wealthy families to declare that

their ancestors “came over with the Conqueror,” and Battle Abbey was always ready to oblige a liberal patron by adding his name to the Roll. In the words of Dugdale: “Such hath been the subtlety of some Monks of old, that, finding it acceptable unto most to be reputed descendants to those who were companions with Duke William in that memorable Expedition whereby he became Conqueror of this Realm, as that, to gratify them (but not without their own advantage) they inserted their Names into this antient Catalogue”; and Camden repeats the charge. “Whosoever,” he says, “considers well shall find them always to be forged, and those names inserted which were never mentioned in that authenticated record.”

On the surrender of Battle Abbey, it and its lands were granted by the King to Sir Anthony Browne, in 1538. The knight did not come into his property with the good will of the neighbourhood, which, pauperised by and dependent on the monks, with anger saw them thrust forth into the world, and loved to tell how the last of the brethren to issue from the gate turned and cursed him with the doom of the sacrilegious. “By fire and water,” he declared, his line should end. We are not told whether Sir Anthony Browne quailed—as on the stage he certainly would have done—or if he merely laughed; but there can be no doubt that the people of Battle awaited the issue with great interest, and that, when nothing happened, they were disappointed. Instead of Sir Anthony Browne or any of his family being cut off

untimely, they flourished exceedingly, and his son became a peer, under the title of Viscount Montagu.

The estates of Battle passed from the family in the time of the sixth Viscount, who in 1719 sold them to Sir Thomas Webster, the first of a long line of Baronets who (with an interval from 1857 to 1901) have held them ever since. In all that time the curse slept, and possibly when the sixth Viscount Montagu parted with Battle and retired wholly to his great mansion and beautiful park of Cowdray, he thought the spell had been effectually broken by this severance.

But the long-dormant curse woke up and worked itself out in 1793, when the beautiful mansion of Cowdray was destroyed by fire. In the following month the eighth Lord Montagu, while yet ignorant of this disaster, met his death by drowning in the Falls of Lauffen, near Schaffhausen, when attempting to shoot the rapids in a boat. He was but twenty-four years of age.

The next heir to the estates of Cowdray, the ninth and last Viscount, was a Roman Catholic priest, who died childless, in 1797, in spite of the fact that he was dispensed from his vows in order that he might marry and continue the line. The property was then inherited by his sister, Mrs. Stephen Poyntz, whose two sons were shortly afterwards drowned at Bognor. Her husband then sold Cowdray.

All this proves how very careful it behoves those to be who launch curses on roving com-

missions. Even the Websters seem to have shared to some degree in this malediction, for the fourth Baronet committed suicide, June 3rd, 1800, by shooting himself with a pistol at his London house in Tenterden Street, Hanover Square. He had been embarrassed by heavy losses at cards. This eccentric and unfortunate man, Sir Godfrey Webster, married Elizabeth Vassall, a great Jamaican heiress, who in 1795, at Florence, while her husband was away in England on business, left him and her two children for the third Lord Holland. Lord Stavordale, in his memoir, skates cautiously over the thin ice of this affair. He says the meeting of that guilty pair "was destined to alter the whole course of their lives. They became deeply attached to one another, and after many months spent in various parts of the Continent, returned to England in 1796."

Sir Godfrey obtained a divorce in July, 1797, and two days later Lord Holland married the lady, known to diarists and writers of memoirs as "the celebrated Lady Holland." Had she been less rich she would doubtless have been merely "the notorious." Her entertainments and her biting wit (she was a kind of female Douglas Jerrold) absolved her from the ostracism that would have been the lot of one less wealthy, less acid, and less hospitable. She lived a long life in the centre of political and social functions, and died in 1845.

This Sir Godfrey Webster is "the very worthy Baronet" referred to by "Thomas Ingoldsby" in the preface to the second edition of the "Ingoldsby

Legends" as "protesting against a defamatory placard at a general election :

Who steals my purse steals stuff!—
 'Twas mine—'tisn't his—nor nobody else's!
 But he who runs away with my GOOD NAME,
 Robs me of what does not do him any good,
 And makes me deuced poor:

a novel reading of Iago's passionate declaration, *Othello*, Act iii., Scene 3 :

Who steals my purse steals trash; 'tis something, nothing;
 'Twas mine, 'tis his, and has been slave to thousands;
 But he, that filches from me my good name,
 Robs me of that, which not enriches him,
 And makes me poor indeed.

His also was the reading :

Pray, who can hold a fire in his hand
 By thinking on the frosty cock-horses?—

a new version of Bolingbroke's speech in *Richard the Second* :

Oh, who can hold a fire in his hand
 By thinking on the frosty Caucasus?

Sir Godfrey Webster, sixth Baronet, in 1857 sold Battle Abbey to Lord Harry Vane, afterwards Duke of Cleveland, chiefly because of the extraordinary situation brought about by there being at that time no fewer than five dowager Lady Websters drawing jointures from the already impoverished property. It had long been a cherished dream of the Websters to repurchase

their old home, and this was realised in 1901 by Sir Augustus Webster, the present and eighth Baronet, on the death of the Duchess of Cleveland. But although he effected that aim, he could not maintain the Abbey itself, and accordingly let it to Mr. Grace, the wealthy American who resides



A DESCENDANT OF THE SAXON CHURLS.

there now and lords it over this historic spot and this beautiful park occupied by English gentlemen when the place whence he came was the primeval forest roamed by the North American redskin. It is a picturesque example of the newer conquering of England by the dollar, over eight hundred

years after the famous battle that won it with the sword.

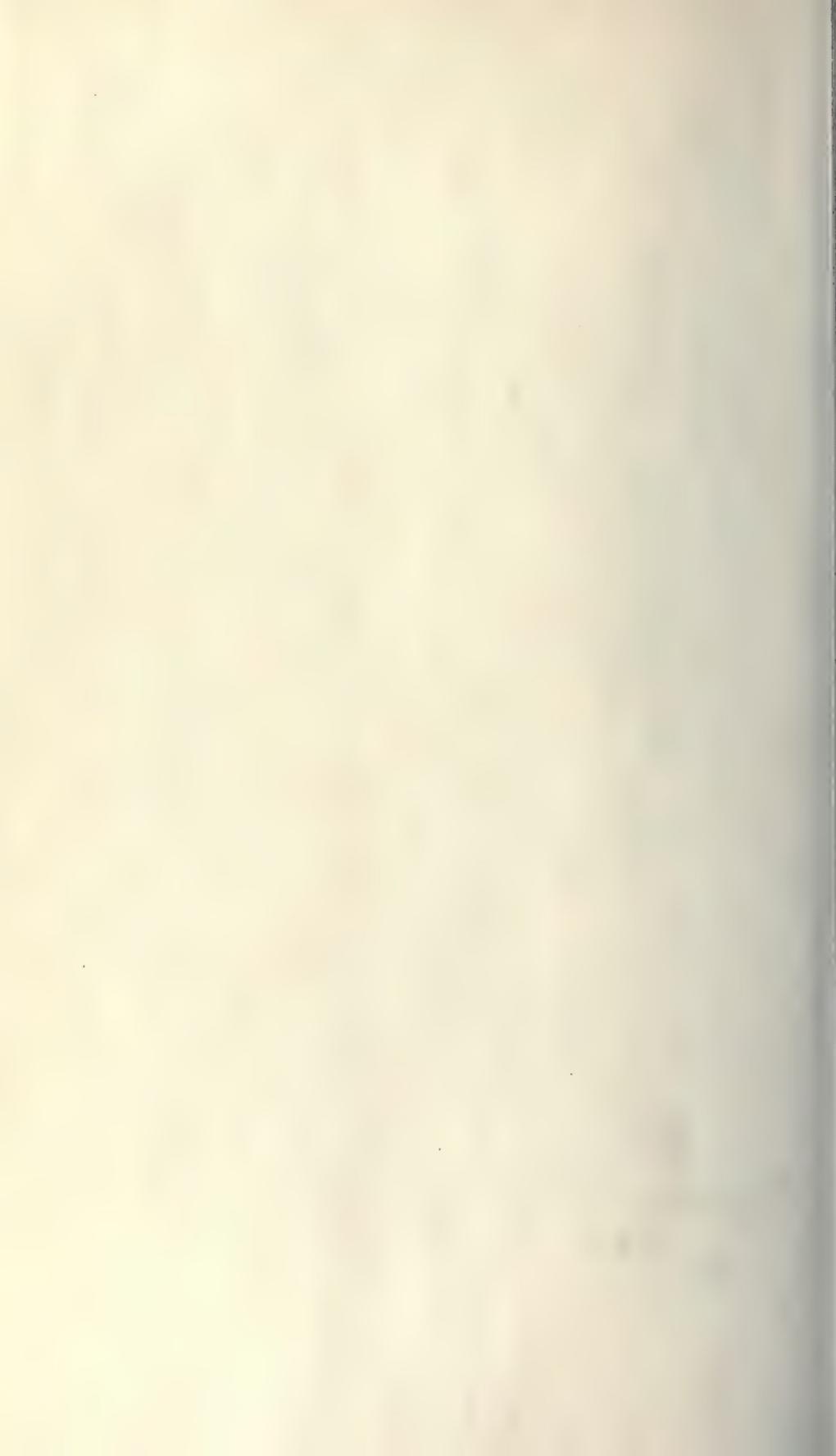
It is in a remote and picturesque corner of the park, in Powder Mill House, that Sir Augustus Webster resides; in a house which, as indicated by its name, was one of those gunpowder factories whose numerous accidents, according to Horsfield, historian of Sussex, "it would be harrowing to relate and uncharitable to publish."

The manufacture is a thing of the past at Battle, but the great pond, used in the work, remains, and so do those brushwood thickets that contributed charcoal to the industry. Brushwood coppices are still one of the character-touches of the place, and those "leather-legged chaps, the clay and coppice people," as Cobbett names them, are, as they have been from Saxon times, the greater proportion of the inhabitants. Any day their rustic and toil-worn figures, bent under huge faggots, may be seen in Battle street, and they serve to show how, although the Normans and the monks in turn have gone, the rural Saxon people remain.

When Sir Anthony Browne came into possession of Battle, he lost no time in demolishing the church of the Abbey and many of its domestic surroundings. The Abbot's great hall and apartments he converted into a mansion, and with a portion of the stones from the demolished church added other rooms.



BATTLE ABBEY.



XLV

ALL these things are enclosed within the massive walls and the great Gateway that face the open market-place of Battle town as though the Abbey itself were still perfect behind them. Once a week great crowds of visitors come from Hastings, by rail, by waggonette, or a-foot, and pay their sixpences to be conducted over the place. They see the wooden beam projecting from the walls of the Gatehouse, and learn that it was a gallows ; they are bidden look through the windows of the modern drawing-room that was the monastic "locutorium," or parlour, for the reception of strangers ; they stand on the terrace, and look down upon the valley of Senlac and the corresponding heights of Telham, the way the Conqueror's army advanced to the attack. Then the guide conducts to the site of the High Altar, the spot where Harold fell, to the gardens, once the Cloisters ; then to the great roofless Refectory. Beneath it are the three fine crypts. One of them the guide calls the Scriptorium, but the name has little meaning for him. If you ask him to point out the site of the Oesophagus, the Pericardium, or the Cerebellum, he will look puzzled for a moment ; but, rallying, will declare them to have been destroyed so long ago that their sites are uncertain. At last, with evident relief, he conducts the crowd to the gate, and saying, "That's all I can show you to-day, ladies and gentlemen," dismisses them.

A relic of more savage times than these of ours still exists in the market-place, in the iron ring to which the bull was tethered when bull-baiting was a popular sport. It has recently been covered over with earth.

The parish church of Battle, standing beside the



BATTLE CHURCH.

road on the way out of the town, was a "peculiar," i.e. independent of ecclesiastical control. Its incumbent is not merely a vicar or a rector, but a dean, and is appointed by the owner of Battle Abbey, still the lay Abbot. In the chancel lie Sir Anthony Browne and his wife, with a magnificent tomb over them, and in the churchyard is

the humble stone to Isaac Ingall, who died after ninety years' service at the Abbey, in 1798, aged 120. Beginning as postilion, he ended as major-domo. At the age of 107, resentful of some indignity—perhaps some one had called him “old”—he went off in quest of another situation.

Beneath the town and the church, the road crosses the railway. The allotment gardens,



A BYE-ROAD AT BATTLE.

squalid with little sheds, after their kind, stand below Harold's centre, on the spot where the fight raged fiercest. But the finest idea of the battlefield is to be obtained from the bye-road that here turns to the right, and, skirting the park, runs to the site of the old Powder Mills. It is far better than looking down, with the crowd, from the terrace of the Abbey, and hearing the parrot-talk of a guide. Here you are in the spirit-company of the invaders, and can appreciate better their

task of charging up to that ridge where Harold and his warriors stood then, where the Abbey buildings stand now.

It is magnificent. The park-like landscape, dotted with clumps of trees in the uplands; a line of oaks and undergrowth following the course of the stream in the bottom; the town nested in woods, and Caldbeck windmill on the right, where, the rustics say, William "called 'em back." Away down by Powder Mill House, in the coppices, one may still see the rocky ravine in whose depths the Norman cavalry fell in the fierce rally after their pretended flight. The ledges still drip red, as they needs must do, for the ground is rich in iron; but, although the explanation of the old legend that the soil weeps blood is prosaic enough, yet the sight is not without its impressiveness, and vividly recalls the magnificent opening lines of *Maud*:

I hate the dreadful hollow behind the little wood,
Its lips in the field above are dabbled with blood-red heath;
The red-ribb'd ledges drip with a silent horror of blood,
And Echo there, whatever is ask'd her, answers "Death."

XLVI

OVER Telham Hill to Starr's Green, past Crowhurst Park, where an ancient tumulus peeps over the palings, lies the way to Hastings. On the left-hand is the beautiful, but neglected, Beauport Park, fast going back to wildness. Here a fork

in the road is furnished with a sign-post directing both ways to Hastings. This puzzler for strangers is explained by the right-hand and shorter route being the "New London Road," made when St.



THE ROAD PAST CROWHURST PARK.

Leonards came into existence, and that to the left the "Old London Road," in exclusive use in days before St. Leonards was thought of.

The "new" road leads down to Hollington, a suburban village almost entirely swallowed up by

expansion of the town. One of the old-established sights of Hastings is, or was, Old Roar, half a mile or so to the left-hand of it.

Old Roar was a waterfall, and the ravine through which it roared exists to this day, as those who seek it, after tracing several fields and pathways hemmed in between villas, shall find. Even so far back as 1827 it was described as "not so considerable as thirty years ago," and sceptical writers of that time declared there never had been a period when it was not said of Old Roar that "he is not so good as last season." In 1841 Mrs. Mozley, sister of Cardinal Newman, wrote a novel called "The Lost Brooch," which no one has ever succeeded in reading, and in it she describes Old Roar as possessing "all the points necessary for a very good cataract, except one—water: rather a serious want in a waterfall." Yet there was a time when its hoarse voice was to be distinctly heard a mile away. Pause to-day on the wooden bridge that spans the gorge, and only a dampness that discolours the stones is seen through the trees that spring from the sides.

This is typical of much else around Hastings or any other town that has equally expanded. To the right of the road lies Hollington church: the "Church in the Wood," famous in all this country-side as a romantic solitude. There are woods here now, but not so extensive as before, and the church is no longer *in* them, but on the fringe of what remains. The church itself, restored and practically rebuilt, is utterly and absolutely without

interest; and the churchyard is now nothing but a cemetery filled with costly and pretentious monuments. Yet, such is the force of habit and tradition, it will be found, on examining the huge, ledger-like visitors' book kept in the porch, that an average of five hundred people make pilgrimage to the spot daily in the holiday season. They see nothing worth the trouble, and having seen it go away again not displeased, for to visit the "Church in the Wood" is a duty laid upon the holiday-maker, and will be, even when there is no wood remaining. The way to and from it is by "Old Church Road," where you find houses named with even more than the usual want of propriety. Thus "Sea View" does not look upon the sea, "Fair View" is opposite a manure-heap, and from "Old Church View" you cannot view the church.

It is not worth the while exploring the New London Road. It is dispiriting, and those electric tramways that are the tyrants of the roads for miles around Hastings and St. Leonards render the way of the cyclist down Silverhill hazardous in the extreme. It is true the map shows the attractive name of "Bohemia" here, but it is only a mean—the meanest and miserablest—suburb. Henri Murger, Bohemian of that artistic and literary Bohemia that is not mapped, died, disillusioned, exclaiming against his wasted life in that land of rosy visions, "*pas de Bohème*," and we may adopt his saying and, appropriating it to this drab purlieu, turn back and make for Hastings by the Old

London Road, itself not particularly attractive in these times.

You come along it, at the beginning of Baldslow, to a weird corner where a road comes up from Sedlescomb and, cutting under the Old London Road in an archway, makes for St. Leonards. Here the tramway poles and wires are insistently



JUNCTION OF ROADS SPOILED BY TRAMWAYS, BALDSLOW.

ugly, and the village or hamlet of Baldslow itself is scarce prepossessing. A roadside public-house, a gaunt windmill, a few ugly cottages, and a tin tabernacle church are its component parts. But immediately beyond that corrugated and galvanised ecclesiastical horror the road grows beautiful, overhung with trees. Here, at the entrance to a country house in the domestic-gothic sort, are two very fine clipped yew-trees. It is Holmhurst, and

the trees are those christened by Mr. Hare "Huz and Buz."

Holmhurst is not historic, in the larger way, but to those who are familiar with the literary work of Augustus J. C. Hare, it is a place to be regarded with interest and affection. Augustus Hare wrote many books. His "Walks in Rome" and "Walks in London" are the best known of them, but his "Story of my Life" is of course the most intimate, and it is the most endearing. His own half-humorous declaration that it is "a ponderous autobiography of a nobody" was heartily and unkindly endorsed by reviewers, but, at any rate, no one can read those six volumes without conceiving an affection for the author of them. He was a lovable man.

Augustus Hare, born 1834, died January 22nd, 1903, never married. He came of the family of Hares of Hurstmonceaux, a family at one time so numerous and so abundantly inter-married with the titled and landed classes that he could claim cousinship in different degrees with a very large circle in Society. But to call him a Society man would be as unjust as it would be to style him a *dilettante* in literature and the arts, for he had no vices, was no idler, and earned a very excellent literary repute. The "Story of my Life," made up, as it is, largely from letters and journals, recounting his visits and the people he met, earned him with some sour critics of his work, the opprobrious title of "literary valet," but it is so sincere and without artifice that

the reproach is most undeserved, although his artistic, friendly, and family sympathies certainly often led him into praises which amusingly remind one of the famous epitaph on that Lady Jones who was “bland, passionate, and deeply religious. She was a niece of Horace Walpole and painted in water-colours, and of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

A welcome guest at country-house parties, he generally figured at them as a family connection, as a literary man and artist, and as an accomplished narrator of ghost stories. He indeed “called cousins” with so many people of note that the Crown Prince of Sweden, to whom he became bear-leader for a time, when asked what astonished him most in England, replied “the number of Mr. Hare’s cousins.” He was, in fact, the human exemplar of the fabled “hare with many friends.”

XLVII

THE story of his life is a strange one. He tells how, as the third son, and most unwelcome addition to his parents’ growing family, he was, at the age of eighteen months, given away by his father and mother to a recently widowed and childless aunt, as eager to adopt, as his unnatural parents were keen to be rid of him. The aunt was Maria (Leycester) Hare, widow of his uncle Augustus; and thus, in the similarity of Christian names at least, there was a peculiar appropriate-

ness in this adoption, which was undertaken in what seems a very cold-blooded way : the parents to have no claim upon their son and the aunt to be called "mother"; as indeed, throughout the story of his life, she is styled. She brought him up and sent him to Oxford, and for thirty years they lived



"Huz and Buz": ENTRANCE TO HOLMHURST.

together, as mother and son. He wrote a panegyric on her, in the "Memorials of a Quiet Life," and in the long story of his own is seen to have been very much more affectionate than many real sons are. Yet the reader of his pages cannot help coming to the conclusion that the "sweet mother," as he constantly styles her, was not only afflicted with a very dour religiosity, but was a tyrant in

his infancy, and an exacting invalid, and an incredibly mean, parsimonious and suspicious creature during his youth and early manhood. But, for all that, no real mother ever had so good a son, so tender and constant a nurse in sickness, as he.

When, in 1860, it became necessary for his adopted mother to leave Lime and seek a new home, they long sought the ideal home of their fancy, which they named, in advance, "Holmhurst." All through that summer they inspected innumerable small estates in the south of England, but none were in the least like that ideal "Holmhurst," and they were on the point of abandoning the quest for awhile, and going abroad, when a neighbour sent a Hastings paper with the humble advertisement, "At Ore, a house with thirty-six acres of land, to be let or sold."

"What a horrible place this must be," I said, "for they cannot find one word of description"; for the very ugliest places we had seen had often been described in the advertisements as "picturesque manorial residences," "beautiful villas with hanging woods," &c. But my mother rightly thought that the very simple description was perhaps in itself a reason why we should see it. . . . Long before we could arrive at Ore, we passed under a grey wall overhung by trees. "It looks almost as if there might be a Holmhurst inside that wall," I said. Then we reached a gate between two clipped yew-trees, and a board announced, "This house is to be let or sold." We drove in. It was a lovely day. An arched gateway was open towards the garden, showing a terrace, vases of scarlet geraniums, and a background of blue sea. My mother and I clasped each other's hands and simultaneously exclaimed—"This is Holmhurst!"

We found that the name of the place was Little Ridge. There were six places called Ridge in the neighbourhood, and it was very desirable to change the name, to prevent confusion at the post-office and elsewhere. Could we call it anything but Holmhurst? Afterwards we discovered that Holmhurst meant an ilex wood, and our great tree is an ilex.

And here they made their home. Ten years later his adopted mother died here, and here he passed out of these shadows and unrealities, suddenly and painlessly, when another thirty-two years had gone, little more than two years after he had, in writing the concluding words of the story of his life, said :

When I look at the dates of births and deaths in our family in the Family Bible, I see that I have already exceeded the age which has usually been allotted to the Hares. Can it be that, while I still feel so young, the evening of life is closing in? Perhaps it may not be so; perhaps long years may still be before me. I hope so; but the lesson should be the same, for "man can do no better than live in eternity's sunrise."

It would be unpardonable to leave unmentioned the additions to the house he loved so well and the gardens and shrubberies he delighted in. Still stands the sundial on the lawn, that sundial which had been placed by his great-great-grandfather, Bishop Hare, on his house of the Vatche, at Chalfont St. Giles, Buckinghamshire, and was presented to him in 1859 by the then owners of the Vatche. Still one looks delightfully across these uplands down to the sea, where the craggy

ruins of Hastings Castle cut across the horizon, and the streets of Hastings come crawling dimly up out of the vale; but the Hospice in the grounds, where he continually housed and entertained his pensioners, is empty, and the garden-paths have lost their trimness and become overgrown with grass since strangers have come and reduced the staff.

Even Queen Anne, whom he brought down from London and set up in the meadow, looks neglected.

Every Londoner is familiar with the white marble group of figures in front of St. Paul's Cathedral, representing Queen Anne (now, alas! deceased) presiding over four seated effigies, emblematic of England, France, Ireland, and the North American Colonies of her days; but few recollect that this group is not the original of the one sculptured by Bird in 1712. Bird's work had for many years fallen into a disgraceful state of neglect. Her Majesty's nose had long been chipped off and her forearms had disappeared, while the four seated figures, with scarce a complete set of limbs among them, more nearly resembled the victims of a railway accident than the highly respectable allegorical group they really were. The whole composition was therefore cleared away, and an entirely new and scrupulously exact replica was made by the afterwards notorious Richard Belt, and placed in its stead.

The battered and grimy original disappeared from public ken, and was wholly forgotten, when

Mr. Hare in 1893 discovered its component parts lying in a heap in the City of London stoneyard, on the point of being broken up, and greatly coveted them for the embellishment of Holmhurst. He found that the poor relics were jointly owned by the Archbishop of Canterbury, the



QUEEN ANNE, AT HOLMHURST.

Bishop of London, and the Lord Mayor, and eventually persuaded all those eminent personages to make him a present of the remains, which were removed by road to Holmhurst, "at great expense," as he says, with the aid of twenty-eight horses, four trucks, four trollies, and sixteen men. He re-erected them in his grounds, at a still greater expense, on a circular stone pedestal,

similar to the original, which he had quarried from the outcroppings of stone on this little estate.

XLVIII

BEYOND Holmhurst comes the long-drawn parish of Ore, heralded by its modern church, rather overloaded with ornament. It replaces the old church of St. Helen, lying hidden away to the right, across a field and within a belt of trees.

Augustus Hare thought the ruins of the old church “rather picturesque”: an instance of how an everyday familiarity may blunt appreciation, for they are picturesque without any minimising qualification. To the active and enterprising it is no difficult matter to climb the tall locked gate of the enclosure that keeps out the swarming mischievous children that come destructively up out of Hastings, and easy to avoid the plentiful nails and savage barbed wire that would induce others to seek the keys at Ore Place.

It is a melancholy ruin of a fine church in the Perpendicular style, built over five hundred years ago, and left to moulder away because the neighbourhood lusted for the brand new building beside the road, yonder. The roof is entirely gone, and part of the walls, covered in places with ivy. Neglect is the note of the place. A curious relic is fixed on the wall in the tower in the shape of a “pitch-pipe,” an instrument used by parish clerks in the old days to give the key of tunes to con-

gregations. The unusual name of "Lavender" is seen on one of the old tombstones.

Ore is a scattered parish : neither good town nor decent country. The road passes the Hastings cemetery and the isolated suburb of St. Helen's Down, and comes to the enclosing wall and gates of Coghurst Park, where an elaborately sculptured



RUINS OF THE OLD CHURCH, ORE.

coat of arms, surmounted by the crest of a hare and hound, looks down with contempt upon the poor specimens of houses that have sprung up opposite.

And then you come to Ore itself, that used to be, not so very long ago, a pleasant place—half village, half suburb. It is now a good deal more like a slum, and the incursion of the electric

tramways has not improved it. The tram-lines are to be avoided by bearing to the right, down the long and steeply descending Harold Road, which, like too many of the modern developments of Hastings, is a road of mean and paltry houses, built cheaply and faced with stucco that seems to have been made of dirt, rather than of honest materials. There is a woeful "respectability" about these roads that desolates the stranger. He sees it clinging, ineffectual on insufficient means, to the bayed windows and to the doors, painted and grained to resemble good woods, that will insist upon warping. It resides in the long flights of steps up to those doors, and is on outpost duty at the little brick entrance-piers, too flimsy to hold up the not very great weight of the iron gates that scream dismally on their hinges.

The Old London Road, however, continues down through Halton, and, although it does not get rid of the tram-lines, comes, at the beginning of Hastings, to a very pleasant hollow where the old elms still make an avenue introductory to the town.

This is the most striking part of that valley between the east and west hills in which the Old Town of Hastings lies. It was in the coaching days a supremely beautiful entrance to the town, and travellers of that time never tired of praising it. In front of them, in the V-like cleft, sparkled the sea, with the trees surrounding the hoary red-capped roof of All Saints' in the foreground, and on either side steep grassy slopes, as yet but

thinly built upon. On the left-hand rose the Minnis Rock ("Minnis" is Cantise for a rough, stony common), a stony outcrop on the hillside that was the site of a hermitage until about 1436, when the "new church of All Saints' of Hastynges" was built, and gave the death-blow to the hermits who had lived there upon the



THE OLD LONDON ROAD.

charity of passers-by. The Rock is there to this day, and the rough chambers in it, but they are choked with rubbish. The last occupants were very much post-Reformation anchorites. They were an old couple who left the local workhouse in 1783, and, in a secular way, subsisted upon alms which the original hermits received for religion's sake.

The modern terrace of High Wickham crowns the Minnis heights at this day, and great masses of houses have encroached upon the natural beauty of the scene; but still there is a very special charm in it.

It is the *old* town you see there before you, for whose sake we have come these last three miles by the Old London Road: the only Hastings there was, until the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The site selected for the town was sheltered, as the traveller viewing it from this point may see. It lay in the deep and not very broad ravine between the East and West Hills, and while the one protected it from the winds of one quarter, the other served the like office in the opposite direction. And through the centuries, the Castle crowning the West Hill kept watch and ward over it against other foes. There you see the few shattered walls of it, against the sky-line, and down in the hollow St. Clement's, the mother-church of Hastings.

XL

RISING from amid the trees immediately before you, at the entrance to the town and the branching of High Street and All Saints' Street, is All Saints' Church, the other of the two old churches of the Old Town. It stands immediately at the foot of that great chalky down which drops sheer to the sea and is known as East Cliff; and its crowded

churchyard, hemmed in with grimy houses, runs at a steep angle up the hillside. I am not greatly impressed with the interior of the church, but its tower is altogether admirable. It has that best thing in towers, sturdiness, and with its deeply splayed buttresses, strongly marked string-courses, and general air of refined emphasis, is the embodiment of strength and beauty. I feel especially grateful to it, for it stands just where it should for pictorial composition, at the head of the old street, and it and the old "White Hart" inn form excellent foils to one another, as Church and Inn should do. They are as antithetic, in the sentiment of the scene, as light and shade are in the rendering of it.

Let those who are desirous of immortal fame see that an eccentric epitaph marks the spot where they lie. There is no surer passport to eternal recollection. Thus, apart from "Old Humphrey," a local celebrity who lies here, the hundreds of the dear departed might be anonymous for all any one cares; excepting three only. Even the casual, unobservant stranger entering the church can scarce help seeing the epitaph on "John Archdeacon," who died in 1820, aged nine; but if he did *not* see it, it is quite certain his attention would soon be drawn that way, for it is a cherished local curiosity:

Here lies an only darling Boy
Who was his widow'd Mother's joy;
Her grief and sad affliction prove
How tenderly she did him love.

In childish play he teas'd a mule
 Which rag'd its angry owner's soul,
 And through whose angry blows and spleen
 This child so soon a corpse was seen.
 His Mother now is left to mourn
 The loss of her beloved Son.
 Though sighs and tears will prove in vain,
 She hopes in Heaven to meet again.

The name of a modern public-house in the town, the “Kicking Donkey,” near St. Clement’s Church, would appear to have derived from this, although the pictorial sign represents the quite different scene of a seaside holiday-maker trying to keep his seat on the back of a restive jackass.

The second unusual epitaph is to a smuggler :

This Stone
 Sacred to the memory of
 Joseph Swain, Fisherman
 was erected at the expence of
 the members of the friendly
 Society of Hastings
 in commiseration of his cruel and
 untimely death and as a record of
 the public indignation at the need-
 less and sanguinary violence of
 which he was the unoffending Victim

He was shot by Geo. England, one
 of the Sailors employ'd in the Coast
 -blockade service in open day on the
 13th March 1821 and almost instantly
 expir'd, in the twenty ninth Year of
 his age leaving a Widow and five
 small children to lament his losf.

The third immortal is Edward Alldridge, “who was Maliciously shot, April 23rd, 1806. Aged 41

years." It is curious that his son Edward was, according to the same stone, "accidentally shot, May 13th, 1810. Aged 15 years."

There is little time in this age for brooding over historical celebrities or notorieties, but if Hastings dwelt much upon the past, it could find little pleasure in the recollection that it was



ALL SAINTS'.

the birthplace of Titus Oates, whose baptism is registered in 1619, in the books of All Saints', of which his father was afterwards rector. Titus was himself curate here.

Much, indeed, might be written of the clergy of All Saints', but not a large proportion of it to their credit. I do not know if we may fairly include him who was hanged at Tyburn in 1586

for the crime of forging his presentation to the living. He was not properly rector. As he had to be hanged in any case, it seems a pity they did not suspend him from the tower of All Saints'; it would have been much more picturesque. He was practically wasted at Tyburn, where executions were an everyday dish.

Then there was the Reverend Mr. Hinson, royalist, who, busily denouncing the Roundheads in his sermon of Sunday, July 9th, 1643, was told that the subjects of his abuse were in the town, and the stern Colonel Morley even then on the way to make him prisoner. He left his discourse at a loose end and bunked, hooked it, vamoosed, cut his stick, fled, or merely went—just as you please. Only, perhaps, to say he “went” hardly meets the case, for he departed with such celerity that he had not time even to shift his surplice. The Roundheads thereupon occupied the church, made it a dormitory, preached burlesque sermons from the pulpit, and generally behaved like blasphemous blackguards, finally making off with all the surplices they could find.

Mr. Hinson was arrested three days later and lodged in a filthy gaol, with a tinker to match, who was not only dirty but rude, and, declaring he was the elder of the two, and therefore privileged, took the one bench in the place, leaving the curate the cold, cold floor. He had three weeks' imprisonment at Hastings, and how much beside would have been awarded him in London, whither he was removed, we do not

know, for he escaped and joined his King at Oxford, and so is heard of no more.

A tablet in the church to a former rector with the humorous name of Webster Whistler, a connection of Sir Whistler Webster, of Battle Abbey, reminds one of a curious incident. He died at the great age of eighty-four in 1831. A distinguished pluralist, he held the rather distant benefice of Newtimber, on the Brighton Road, in addition to this in Hastings. A quarrel with the squire of Newtimber led to the living of that tiny place being put up to auction in 1817. The clergyman was interested enough to be in London when the sale took place, and to his disgust heard the auctioneer describe Newtimber as held by an infirm and hoary vicar with one foot in the grave, and that consequently the reversion would soon fall in. The Reverend Whistler was then but seventy, and as hale and hearty as a ploughman. He arose in wrath, and so convinced the room of his being good for another twenty years that the advowson found no purchaser.

The much-beneficed Whistler was no ill friend to the smugglers, who then formed a considerable part of the population of Hastings, and passively lent his church to them for a cellar. It was told of him that, hearing movements one night in his garden, and preparing to fire upon those he thought to be burglars, a voice reassured him with the whisper, "Hush, your reverence, it's the brandy!" It was the smugglers' thank-offering. The only flaw in this story is the circumstance that the

clergyman would not have mistaken his smuggling friends for midnight marauders, for he was used to find such gifts brought to his door. Later, when this kind of friendly understanding became too notorious, the kegs were deposited in the crowded churchyard, and visitors at his table sometimes heard him tell his man to "go and see if there's any brandy in old Swain": "old Swain" being one of the numerous clan of that very common name at Hastings, and lying in a table-like tomb which made an excellent and unsuspected cellar.

When this picturesque cleric happened to find his cellar low, he was not averse from hinting at the fact in the texts of his sermons. Discourses upon the "wine that maketh glad the heart of man" and on the miracle of turning water into wine, with applications readily understood by his congregation, rarely failed in their object; for we must by no means suppose that a smuggler was necessarily a lawless and an impious, or even an ungrateful man: and a fervent piety was no bar to "free trading."

The most striking thing in All Saints' Church is a curious notice in the belfry, with words and letters running together like those of an ill-read proof:

This is a belfry that is free
for all those that can civil be
and if you please to chime orring
it is a very pleasant thing.

There is no musick playd or sung
like unto Bells when they rwell rung
then ring your bells well if you can
Silence is best for every man.

But if you ring in Spur or hat
sixpence you pay besure of that
and if a bell you overthrow
pray pay a groat before you go

People who are commonly civil are not, as a rule, enjoined to show civility, and it is therefore fair to assume that there had been disturbances, and sweet bells jangled, before this old notice was set up.

LI

ALL SAINTS' STREET is the most picturesque in the old town. Its houses are for the most part ancient, and rarely are two alike. Many are gabled, some lean heavily forward or against their neighbours, others have latticed casements and great heavy timber frames ; few are those that are not sketchable, and in between them goes the long narrow street, deep down below the raised pavements, towards the sea. The most picturesque of these ancient tenements, and perhaps also the oldest, is certainly the most famous, for it was the home of the aged mother of Admiral Sir Cloutesley Shovel at the time when his squadron came cruising off the Sussex coast. We are told how, coming off Hastings, the Admiral, saying he had business ashore, was rowed to the Stade. Walking up All Saints' Street, to the house pictured here, a humble old woman came forth, and he kissed her, called her "Mother," and asked her blessing.

If improving frenzy will permit, the old house, already well on into its fifth century, is sound enough to last centuries more ; and when modern iron and steel have rusted, or become brittle, its stout oaken timbering will be as sturdy as ever.

Between All Saints' Street and High Street formerly ran the Bourne stream to the sea. Its



OLD HOUSE, ALL SAINTS' STREET.

course is now marked by Bourne Street, running, narrow and steep, to the shore.

And there is the sea. Not something outside the picture, as it seems to the road-farer who, tracing the road to Brighton, comes at last to the Aquarium, and finds the beach and the sea, as it were, "side-shows," but an intimate part of the

place—great waves slapping down vigorously upon a narrow shore, and, when the stormy winds do blow, spouting in great clouds of spray overhead, bringing with them tons of shingle or taking away many cubic yards of Parade and sea-wall.

No one could ever entertain the remotest doubt of Hastings being, in the most intimate sense, the seaside. The roadway of the front, especially the front of the Old Town, is so narrow, and the groyne-protected beach in general of such meagre proportions that, to be housed on the front, is to enjoy every sea-salty benefit of an ocean voyage, without its accompanying miseries of sickness. But the situation is not without its own peculiar drawbacks. Just as some great vessel, ploughing through heaving billows, will, in sailor language, "ship it green," so do the more exposed houses take full measure when waves run high, cataracts flowing down basement steps and converting coal-cellars into impromptu marine tanks.

The elements at Hastings are at odds with the Board of Trade, which has forbidden the Corporation to take beach from the foreshore. Winds, waves, and currents deposit shingle in the roadway, and it has then to be cleared up; and, since the Government Department cannot require it to be replaced, it is sold. According to the town accounts for 1904, the Town Council in that year made £24 out of 120 tons of beach washed up in this way.

The sea in this Old Town corner of Hastings is undoubtedly the "ever fresh, the ever free" of

the poet : the rolling ocean, the heaving billow, and everything adjectival in the marine sort. It is unquestionably that which you fail in many places of the Eastbourne type quite to realise : the home of little sprats and great whales ; the cruising-ground of fisher-boats, steamships, and navies, no less than of the *Albertine*, the *New Albertine*, and the *Favourite* sailing-yachts, on which you get very seasick for the ridiculous sum of a shilling an hour.

The sea is that which your point of view makes it : home of the guardian fleets ; a course upon which steamships earn dividends for their owners ; the grave of thousands of drowned sailors ; or fishing-ground for trawlers and seiners.

For what were you created ? Answer, wild waves ! For the delight of the midsummer child, with spade and bucket, and clothes tucked up ; to enable the railway companies to run excursions to the "resorts" risen by the edge of you ? What, on balance, are you : blessing or curse ? You render our shores inviolate, but your sundering straits and oceans perpetuate Babel and maintain conflicting nationalities.

Were it not for you and St. George's Channel there would be no Ireland, and consequently no Home Rule Question. For that, at any rate, we owe you a grudge—and must, since we cannot yet shift to fill that Channel up—continue to owe it.

This is the Stade, where the fisher-town exists, sufficient to itself, self-contained, and quite as apart in feeling, manners and customs, from the

HASTINGS OLD TOWN.

'*THE HARPER*



modern town and St. Leonards as though it were sundered by gulfs and distances, instead of just adjoining. Not a gulf, in fact, but something in the way of a mountain—the West Hill—intervenes, and only by the narrow line of George Street, Pelham Place, and Castle Street is ready communication open. It is sufficiently ready, but new town and old have different ideals in life, and agree to mingle over that thoroughfare threshold only when business calls. In the unconventional streets of the Old Town you lounge in the sunshine at open windows, or squat in unconcerned deshabille on doorsteps, gossiping across the width of the road ; in modern Hastings the streets are of a greater width, but the manners are more strait, and you do not gaze forth from windows or exchange scandal with the house opposite.

The grandest view of Hastings is that of the Old Town from hard by the modern, but picturesque, Lifeboat House, whence you see the great East Hill looming magnificently up above the huddled houses that, whether they be of old red brick or tarred wood, are all, in the mass, artistically "right." It is, in the summer, a crowded quarter, for the excursionists who feel a little abashed by the stucco magnificences and primnesses of newer Hastings and St. Leonards, and cannot elsewhere come into close communion with the untamed sea, find here an ideal dumping-ground for babies and provision-baskets. Here, thanks to modern masonry groynes, a fine mass of

beach is gradually accumulating, in heaped-up plenty.

But it is not a crowded beach and a sunny sky that give the artist his chance at this point. His opportunity comes at those times when most folk would choose to be under shelter; when the rainbow arches in the leaden sky, the domestic washing of the Old Town flaps wetly in the squalls, and the distant tackle-boxes and the bell-turret of the Fishermen's Church stand out almost in the blackness of silhouettes. Then the East Hill looks all its size, and more.

Unhappily, brutal things have been done in modern times to East Hill and West, in the cutting of shafts through the chalk for lifts; and the scar thus made in the face of the East Hill is, from many points, atrociously prominent; while day-trippers have even been known to mistake the embattled lift-station on the skyline up there for the Castle.

LII

BUT sketchable at every turn is the Stade: the very reverse of St. Leonards, whose formal houses and formal people no one would choose to sketch or interest one's self in. Here is the "Dolphin" inn, the "House for sea-wonders," with an amazing fish from some distant clime hanging, very goggle-eyed and finny, and very dry, by the door; and, no doubt, stranger sights within. Beside it are "Tamarisk Steps." Who is there would not,

for sheer love of their names, explore Tamarisk Steps and Tackleway, that goes inland, parallel with All Saints' Street, to the back of All Saints' itself?

The "tackle-boxes" on the beach at Rock-a-Nore are a peculiar feature of the fisherman's quarter. They are tall, tower-like, black-tarred wooden sheds of four or five storeys' height, built



OLD TACKLE-BOXES, HASTINGS.

in rows at right-angles to the sea, and identified by letters of the alphabet. In them are stored the nets and miscellaneous gear of the smacks. Generally groups of depressed, guernseyed, weather-beaten smacks-men may be seen and spoken with while mending their tackle, and are as unlike the fishermen and longshore folk of the comic artists as well may be. They are not so phenomenally broad in the "starn," so pot-bellied,

nor so patchy ; and, instead of having that little dense patch of spade-beard, like the chin-beards of Rameses and other typical Egyptian statues, as inseparable from the conventional fisherman as a nimbus from the head of a saint, they are either very full-whiskered or quite clean-shaven. But the conventional fisherman will no more become obsolete than the conventional burglar with his ankle-jacks, his fur cap, and his furtive glance ; or the conventional John Bull. There is nothing like them on earth, but they are necessary abstractions for the feeding of unimaginative minds.

You may read in the guide-books how the term "Chop-back" will rouse a Hastings fisherman to fury, and timid, yet inquiring people, approach the subject with them apologetically ; but I declare they turn a puzzled look upon you, and seem hardly to comprehend the meaning of what is supposed to be a very offensive name—"Hastings Chop-backs," deriving from the supposed descent of the Hastings from those Norse rovers whose terrible axes cleaved their enemies down the back from skull to chine. Traditions of this undoubted antiquity are deserving of all respect, and probably the Hastings fisherfolk are descendants of those fierce rovers, but they are the mildest vikings it is possible to conceive, and would no more think of chopping any one down the back than they would dream of refusing a drink, even though the Blue Ribbonites of the Mission Church are active among them.

"Fishin' ain't wot it wur" is the general verdict; neither for "hur'n"—that is to say, "herring"—in the fore-part of the year, nor for mackerel in the after; yet the fish-market on the Stade seems busier than ever in the mornings, and over a thousand people subsist upon the proceeds of the harvest of the sea. But the fisherman is forced to cruise greater distances than before, the Channel being fished out and clean-swept by trawlers. Indeed, to listen to the doleful talk of a Hastings fisherman, one might think that not a single sprat or mackerel swam the English Channel between the North Foreland and the Lizard.

Those who explore this corner of old Hastings will acquire odd pieces of information from the fisherfolk. Rock-a-Nore, it will be found from them, and from one's own personal experience, is the coldest place in the town; and, although they are not responsive to "Chop-backs," they tell you that "Bourne" (*i.e.* Eastbourne) men are "Winnicks." They look with disapproval on the new harbour-works; and are, indeed, true Conservatives, for they instinctively think any change to be inevitably for the worse.

Were I a fisherman I should, at any rate, resent the inference of the Mission Church planted on the beach, in their midst, as though an outpost of Christianity among the heathen. And such a mildewed, blue-mouldy, repellent building! But perhaps the situation, at the remote end—the *cul-de-sac*—of the beach, suggested the idea of

paganism, piracy, and all sorts of unchristian things, at Rock-a-Nore; but if it be true that *Labore est orare*, then the fishermen are on more certain ground than many of the prayerful people who missionise them.

This is indeed, geographically, a dead-end, under the grey-white cliffs of East Hill; and being so, the Hastings Corporation have planted here those undesirable things—a mortuary and a dust-shoot. Next door to the mortuary you see the grim, unconscious humour of a warehousing firm's announcement, "Tapner and Co. for Removals," and at the end of all things, where a gigantic stone and concrete groyne projects into the sea, there is the town dust-destructor. Beyond is the perilous beach to Ecclesbourne, where the toppling cliffs above and the treacherous tide below often offer the unwary the unwelcome choice of being crushed or drowned.

LIII

ON the way from Old Town to New, passing a flagrant music-hall and the hideous stucco semi-circle of Pelham Crescent, you perceive, up aloft, on the craggy cliff's edge, the ragged ruins of the old Norman Castle of Hastings, whose grey and mouldering walls are craggy as those chalk cliffs themselves. It is a long, a circuitous, and an arduous climb to the eyrie where that battered stronghold is perched, and although superior

persons scorn and abuse the lift that brings you swiftly and without toil to that height, the elderly and the unduly fleshy, Hamlet-like persons among them, "fat and scant of breath," take advantage of it, and archaeologise easefully by the aid of modern mechanism. But little remains to arouse enthusiasm or to employ the pencil of the artist, and that which might have been, from its situation, as imposing as the Castle of Dover itself, is but the matter of a few speculative arches and grizzled masonry.

Ever since the historic period, and doubtless long before the era of recorded things began, there existed a castle, or a fortified post, on this lofty cliff-top, where the shattered ruins of Hastings Castle still stand, few and almost formless—the long superannuated warden of the town that has grown so great and has now absolutely no defences against the foreign foe.

When the Normans came, they found defences of some nature here, and hastened from their landing-place at Pevensey to seize and to more strongly fortify them, as scenes in that graphic record, the Bayeux Tapestry, show. The wooden walls, palisades, and outworks thus hastily constructed by the Conqueror's men were speedily discarded for a permanent building of stone, and the grim hold thus erected was given into the custody of the Norman Counts d'Eu, who, jointly with the Abbots of Fécamp, were responsible for keeping open the sea-passage between England and Normandy. This duty was laid upon those

secular and ecclesiastical personages in consideration of the rights granted to the Count d'Eu in the Castle and the Old Town, and the lordship over the "New Burgh" bestowed upon the Abbot of Fécamp.

Time has worked odd changes with Hastings and very thoroughly obscured the ancient names, so that what was then the "old town" has been so long and so utterly swept away and built over that its very existence at any former time is unknown to all save Dryasdust and his brethren. The old original "old town" stood, in fact, where the new town of Hastings stands to-day, and the Old Town of the present time is the "New Burgh" referred to in Domesday Book as the property of the Abbot of Fécamp. Dryasdust, who is a very estimable person and a learned, will tell you all you want to know about it—and much more; but he is always so fully informed, and diverges so abundantly and promiscuously into notes, parentheses, sub-heads, and innumerable asides of that kind that he presently lands you in topographical swamps and mazes, and, feeding you overfull of knowledge, gives you a severe literary and antiquarian indigestion.

In short, to make a plain story of it, where modern Hastings stands, practically level with the water, there spread, at the time when the Battle of Hastings was fought, a quiet inlet of the sea. This was the haven, the natural harbour of refuge against winds and waves, that originally caused the site of Hastings to be selected for a

port. It would never have been chosen and settled had it been without shelter, as it is now ; and Hastings of to-day is merely an artificial growth, like Brighton, Eastbourne, and many another seaside town, sprung up to serve a century or more of holiday-making by the sea. The town, as we see it to-day, would have been impossible had the place depended merely upon fishing and shipping ; for on this stark-naked foreshore, swept by gales and raging seas, there is no shelter for vessels.

It was, in fact, the early silting up of this haven that led to the utter obliteration of the original old town dependent upon it. When the tide no longer flowed up to its ancient quays and wharves, their use, of course, vanished, and they eventually disappeared. In those long-departed days the Castle cliffs and a long reef of rocks extended a considerable distance out to sea, and formed the natural protection for this inlet ; but in the course of centuries the sea made such inroads that the protection at last disappeared, and the shingle, in its easterly march, instead of being kept out in the Channel and on its course, found entrance, and steadily, and by no means slowly, cut off the haven from the outer waters.

Thus was the chief port of the famous Cinque Ports finally ruined by the then irresistible forces of nature. Already, in 1205, it had suffered political ruin ; for, as the chief port in the intercourse between England and Normandy, its trade became extinct on the severance of the Dukedom

of Normandy and the Kingdom of England, in the reign of King John. Five years before even that event the port was far gone to decay, for it could furnish but six of the twenty-one ships that in its prime formed its contribution to the nation's defence.

Apparently the inhabitants of the Hastings that bordered this haven early realised its inevitable doom ; and those of the neighbouring New Burgh—the Old Town of our time—did not shift for themselves, to form a harbour, until the reign of Queen Elizabeth. And even then they were reduced to “ sending round the hat ” for contributions and donations from more prosperous places. Pity the sorrows of a poor old port !

They were led to this course by the destruction of their old wooden pier ; but it was not until seventeen years had passed that sufficient funds had been accumulated and a beginning was made in the spring of 1595. Even so, fate dealt hardly with the place ; for although the new pier was built “ all of huge rocks, artificially pyled, edge-long, one close by another,” so that it was considered highly permanent, it needed only the first storm of the following winter to overthrow it.

Something daunted by this mischance, but not beaten, the Hastings people built the pier anew, and of a different construction, with “ tymber braces and barres, crosse dogges, and suchlike up to the top : bowtyfull to behold,” and much else in that quaint way. Woe, woe ! This

much-admired work had not stood a year when, like the earlier, it was washed completely away. It happened on "All saints' daie, 1597," when "appeared the mighty force of God, who, with the finger of his hand, at one greate and exceeding high spring tyde, with a south-east wynd, overthrew this huge worke in lesse than an hower, to the greate terrour and abashment of all beholders."

The inhabitants this time acknowledged defeat, and, recognising the futility of further endeavour, folded their hands and did—that easiest of things to accomplish—nothing. So, finally, ended the active existence of Hastings as a Cinque Port.

It is true that projects were from time to time raised, but they were never translated from words to deeds. At the beginning of the reign of Charles the First a very promising scheme was reported, by which a Dutch engineer, one Cranhalls, proposed to excavate and reopen the ancient haven at a cost of £220,000; but the beginning of that reign was also the beginning of trouble, and, as the condition of the country at the time was unfavourable for the prosecution of public works, nothing, again, was done.

Had it been possible to undertake those proposed works, Hastings at this time would be a vastly different place from what it is. You are to picture the scene—the bygone haven restored, and all that space now occupied by the very centre of the modern town—the Queen's Hotel, the Albert Memorial, and Queen's Road—a basin, with quays,

wharves, and warehouses. The thing could be accomplished to-day, were it thinkable that the valuable house-property covering the site could be removed ; but what might have been done with vacant land has long become impossible in a crowded town.

Yet, as the merest glance will show the casual visitor, the port and harbour idea is not dead. In these days of questing after the seemingly impossible—of eating your cake and having it too, of having things all ways and every way to your own advantage, an aim which worries individuals and corporations alike—it is not to be supposed that Hastings should be content with its present condition. If it were, it would be exceptional. But it is not. In the eyes of many who know Hastings well and love it much, it is well enough ; but the town will never be content until it has acquired a harbour. It calls aloud for a harbour, just as the proverbial baby cries for the moon, but with this very important difference, that if it calls loud enough and long enough it will eventually get that harbour.

Time was, as we have seen, when it had such a haven, duly provided by Nature, and it now has, or had, a prospect of a newer, provided by private enterprise ; not on or near the old site, but to be formed by building concrete piers out to sea from the East Hill and the fishermen's quarters. One such arm has for some years been completed, but the works now appear to be finally abandoned, and all there is to show for the expenditure of the

matter of a hundred thousand pounds is that long, unrelieved wall where the melancholy surges still sweep toward an unprotected shore.

LIV

MODERN Hastings, like Brighton, dates its rise from the ultimate quarter of the eighteenth century, and its emergence from the status of a fisher town is due to the same prime cause: the discovery by the medical profession of fresh air and sea-bathing as specifics for that mysterious eighteenth-century *malaïse*, "the vapours," and all manner of other ailments. No royal favour, however, helped Hastings; only the recommendations of Dr. Baillie in the first instance, and secondly the fine brisk air of the place itself. Indeed, the climate of Hastings is a matter of as great concern to the town as her looks to a woman: it is her chief asset. You may read strange things of the Hastings climate, and indeed of that of any seaside town whose business is to attract visitors; and you will find, as a matter of curiosity, that Hastings claims not one climate, but several, according to height and position. Like the artful sinner who tried to get the best of both this world and the next, Hastings wants it both ways, and would have you believe it has actually got it, too. Thus, with a reminiscent shiver at the thought of the winds we have faced elsewhere, we read appreciatively of how the

town is “screened from the biting blasts of the north and east winds,” and open to the healthful and uncontaminated vapours” from the south and west, is saved from “the unwelcome calms which envelop some holiday resorts.” This, I take it, is one in the eye for Bath, for example, where in summer the visitor is stewed as effectively as any prune, or for Torquay, whose “gridiron” even St. Lawrence might on occasion find uncomfortably warm; while I think, on the other count, the withers of Brighton and of Weymouth—among other places where the east wind is capable of freezing your very marrow—are severely wrung.

In short, Hastings, by her own showing, is one of those favoured (not to say miraculous) places each of which has the better climate than any other, where the sun shines just so long and so brilliantly as you please, where the winds are never rude and the air never stagnant, and there are four hundred fine days (at the very least of it) to the three hundred and sixty-five of every year.

When Hastings really did begin to rise it grew quickly, and speedily overspread, not merely the old-time site, but brought into existence the twin town of St. Leonards as well. Theodore Hook was—as it seems to us—strangely enthusiastic on the subject of those never-ending terraces, squares, and streets of stucco, new in his day. Says he: “Under the superintendence of Mr. Burton, a desert has become a thickly peopled town. Buildings of an extensive nature

and elegant character rear their heads"—he meant, in plainer English, that they had been built, only perhaps a phrase without those eloquent frills would not have been "literature" as then understood—"where but a few years since the barren cliffs presented their chalky fronts to the storm and wave; and rippling streams and hanging groves adorn the valley which twenty years since was a sterile and shrubless ravine."

Something is decidedly wrong in that description. The "extensive"—might he not equally well have said the "expensive" (?)—buildings and the "thickly peopled town" we allow, but those "hanging groves" and "rippling streams" are just the delightful objects the coming of the octopus streets abolished, and Hook sacrificed truth to a showy antithetical outburst.

I do not think Hook was sincere. I hope he was not, for surely one would sooner forgive literary insincerity than such a perverse taste. Lamb, who wrote of Hastings in 1823, we know was sincerity itself when he said he loved town or country; "but," he says, "this detestable Cinque Port is neither. I hate these scrubbed shoots, thrusting out their starved foliage from between the horrid fissures of dusty, innutritious rocks, which the amateur calls 'verdure to the edge of the sea.' I require woods, and they show me stunted coppices. I cry out for the water-brooks, and pant for fresh streams, and inland murmurs."

He, at any rate, saw nothing of Theodore Hook's "rippling streams and hanging groves."

"There is," continues Lamb, "no sense of home at Hastings. It is a place of fugitive resort, an heterogeneous assemblage of sea-mews and stockbrokers, Amphitrites of the town, and misses that coquet with the ocean. If it were what it was in its primitive shape, and what it ought to have remained, a fair honest fishing-town, and no more, it were something—with a few straggling fishermen's huts scattered about, artless as its cliffs, and with their materials filched from them, it were something."

True; but all that is merely a memory. Something of that vanished Hastings may be recalled by those who discover the Brassey Institute in the centre of the town, and climb to where the collection of local prints and paintings is housed; and something more of it may be seen, still in being, by those others who prowl inquisitively in rear of High Street, and there discover the old parish church of St. Clement, fellow to All Saints. It stands in a tightly wedged corner, on rising ground, surrounded by houses and puzzling alleys, and looks very reverend. It is, in fact, over five hundred years old. An ancient cannon-ball wedged into the western face of its tower is a relic of one or other of the several hostile appearances off the town that were not uncommon in the old days; but whether it be the evidence of Dutch good marksmanship in the seventeenth century, or of French gunnery in the early eighteenth, there is no evidence to show. The corresponding ball on the other

side of the belfry window is by no means a miraculous follow-on shot, but is an instance of the eminently British passion for the *pendant*, for things to match and balance. Just as the



ST. CLEMENT'S CHURCH.

average householder must needs have a vase or a statuette on either side of the clock on the dining-room or drawing-room mantelpiece, or else feel uncomfortably one-sided, so the burgesses of Hastings were uneasy until they had duplicated

the insult some passing privateer had put upon their town ; and so one of these warlike objects is a sham.

LV

I AM told that Hastings discourages the "tripper," and that no longer do cheap day-tickets for weekdays or Sundays prevail. He is discouraged because he brings his nose-bag with him, because his children grow fretful and annoy the select, and because he brings no trade into the town and is off again by nightfall. Thus, paradoxically, he is required not to come because he goes so soon. But perhaps the delays and the peculiar methods of the railways serve more certainly to discourage that variety of holiday-maker. However that may be, no one can deny the "popular" character of the holiday-making in August, which is not the select season at Hastings.

Sunday cheap trips to Hastings were early and for long a feature, and eventually roused the wrath of the Working Men's Lord's Day Rest Association. We need not here go into the rights and wrongs of Sunday tripping ; but should any one discover a little book called "The Story of our Sunday Trip to Hastings," published on behalf of that excellent body, let him read it, and find therein a fund of unconscious humour. The whole and sole intent and purpose of the book is to show, not merely how sinful it is to take a cheap Sunday trip by railway—and especially,

it would appear, to Hastings—but how inevitably uncomfortable and even disastrous it will be. It is a tale of how, one August, a decent working man and his wife and little girl, and an assortment of friends, tripped one Sunday to this seaside. They started betimes—arising at four o'clock in the morning—probably with some foreboding sense that if you want to journey anywhere by South Eastern Railway it is well to get up in advance of the early bird, if not even to start the day before. They drove to Charing Cross in a cab, and it was already very warm. The cabman, indeed, “used a strong expression” to enforce his opinion that they would find it very hot. I think we all know the poetical phrase that cabman made use of.

Of course, the object being to paint this trip in very strong colours, mischances early began; but the party need not have been quite such fools as they are described. Passing over the inevitable dispute with the cabman, we follow them on to the platform, where they saw a porter slip and nearly get killed, whereupon “a sickening horror came over them at the thought of the scene they might have witnessed.” As for that, if you are to speculate upon the grisly “might be,” the blood-boltered “if,” the catastrophic “may happen,” why then there is no peace of mind for you at all, week-day or Sunday.

Friends who were to have been met on the platform were all but missed, and when found insisted upon quarrelling with strangers and

quizzing other members of the party, until at length the train “ceased to move, and we were at our journey’s end.” It did not just “stop,” as ordinarily it does.

See now our party at Hastings. The day was blazing hot, and no shelter was to be found. The glare off the sea seared their eyes, and they took refuge in the streets, with the bitter reflection that they need not have left their home in happy Islington to see pavements and closed shops. Dinner was suggested, and they resorted to a dining-room, rich in the mingled odours of sage and onions and tobacco-smoke, where they dined off what purported to be gosling, but was really an old and half-starved fowl. If the dishes were lukewarm, the room, on the other hand, was blazing hot. “Mr. Peters,” one of the party, called for “malt liquor”—could it by any chance have been “beer”?—and saw that somebody else paid for it; and, this princely and elegant meal over, the party dispersed in various directions.

Then the brilliant idea occurred to one who claimed to know Hastings that a breeze and shady trees would be found in the Castle gardens, on the cliff-top. They climbed that “terrible” road, only to find that the gardens were closed on Sundays, and that, even had they been open, no trees and no shade existed there. Finding at last some stunted, insufficient trees, they rested awhile, descending only to give the girl a chance of fainting in the heat.

And so the weary day dragged on until it was

time to return home. They all assembled at the railway-station, much to the reader's surprise. Why had not some of them taken a boat and been drowned, or been eaten by a sea-serpent? Why had they not even missed the train? We shall learn.

"Fate cannot harm me, I have dined to-day," says the poet; but disasters seem inevitably to wait upon those who "trip, trip, trip it" to the sea on Sunday; especially if they dine upon emaciated fowl sinfully masquerading as a young goose.

No appalling disaster happened to the swift South Eastern train. It did not, strange to say, break down, and still less did it come into collision with another. Nor even were train-wreckers prowling along the line, to place obstructions upon the metals and so bring the sinful to an appropriately ghastly end. No: nothing of that kind happened; but when two-thirds of the journey had been accomplished a thunderstorm broke. "Never mind, we'll soon be at home," said Martha. "Alas! it seemed as if home grew more distant than nearer."

But at last London was reached and an omnibus with difficulty found. On the way, however, a horse, overworked with Sunday labour, fell dead, and the journey had to be miserably finished in the rain. What, by the way, would have been made to happen to a motor-omnibus? That could not fall dead.

The party reached home at last, but Martha

fell ill, and eventually died of consumption. "Never," declares the supposed narrator of this elegant piece of fiction, "shall I forget our Sunday Trip to Hastings."

I should think not, indeed!

Let us therefore go to Hastings by road : and be sure it is not on a Sunday.



A SLAIN NORMAN.

Bayeux Tapestry.

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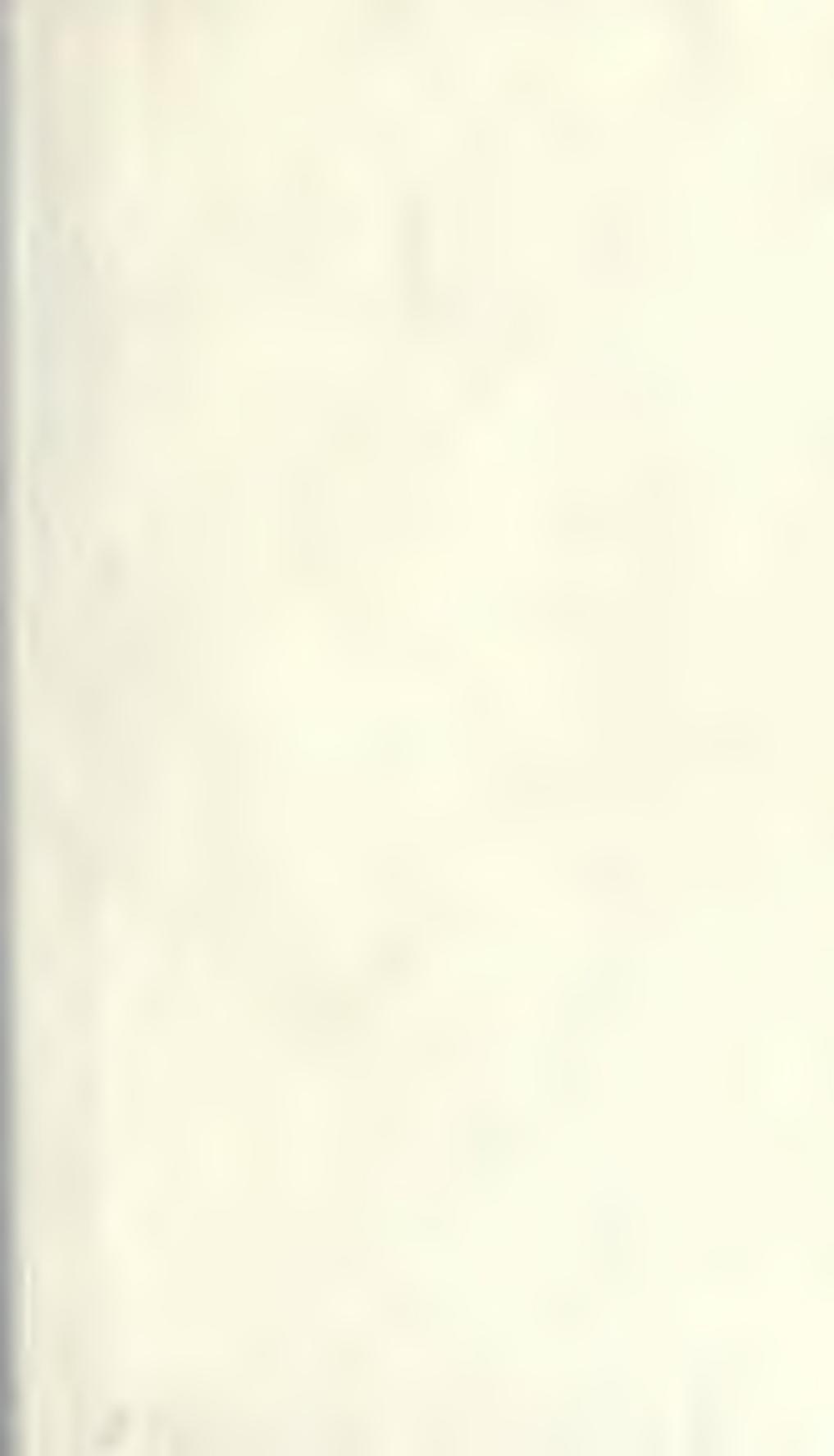
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The Hastings road and
the "happy springs of Tun-
bridge"

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